

The Message of Autumn - by Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM

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THE MESSAGE OF AUTUMN

All of us who inhabit the earth are creatures subject to change. Nothing within us or around us just stands still. Time is always moving us forward. How can we be bored when our world never stays the same? Today's invitation is not exactly what tomorrow will offer.

In the northern hemisphere and particularly in Maine, autumn presents us with a special radiance. Simultaneous with such beauty, warnings are issued about the need for preparation. Winter will be here soon. We had better think ahead to that stretch of ice and snow.

Leaves are releasing their bright green color and letting orange, yellow, and red shine forth before dropping, dropping, dropping slowly to the ground. Many animals are storing extra food in their bodies as they foresee a period of dormant hibernation. Scurrying squirrels gather winter provisions of nuts and ripe berries. Numerous birds are on the wing to warmer climes. And migrating ducks move slowly southward along the lake.

Preparation, preparation. We too are gathering in the fruits of harvest to fortify ourselves through a winter's cold. Wood is piling high for hungry stoves. Awareness of future requirements makes these autumn days demanding and active. Vacation is over for most of us. The dawn arrives later.

Each of the seasons seems to impart a special lesson concerning temporal life. Autumn changes its garments to show us fresh attire with each morning's sunrise. As sleep leaves our eyes, let's look out the window to praise the Creator Who presents us with such a display of beauty. Earth and sky speak of their Maker. "Of old You established the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands....Like clothing You change them and they are changed" (Ps 102: 26,27). John Keats in his poem "To Autumn" addresses the fall season.

*Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue.*

Autumn days tell us to rejoice in what we behold, and they tell us to look ahead at that which is to come. Faith in Jesus takes hold of the present moment and also points to the everlasting where fulfillment awaits us after this period of earthly existence-- whether it be long or short. As we prepare for the next season of time, we pause to consider what beckons when all time is over.

Spring is the beginning of new life as our own birthing was. Summer is youth and then moves onward to middle age. Autumn is a maturing that carries with it the fruit of wisdom gained from earlier seasons. Yes, green leaves change color but how glorious they become. Our later decades have much to communicate to younger friends and family members who in their turn will move on to senior years.

The autumn of life foresees the winter which brings us closer to our mortal dying, but that does not make it a season for mourning. The bright hues of fall proclaim in stuttering stanzas the unending beauty we shall partake of. Increasing wrinkles are lines a Divine Artist paints upon our countenance, marking us with the label of the Incarnate One Who accompanies us through all the seasons of our lives. The days allotted to each human being are preordained according to heaven's plan that began when our parents conceived us. For some, the span of this world's time is encompassed in fewer years, yet the work of redemption there is already accomplished.

Each ongoing moment can help us become more fully sharers "in the glory that is to be revealed" (1 Pt 5: 1). We are exhorted in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "Make the most of the present opportunity" (5: 16). The ongoing alterations of the seasons have lessons to teach us about all the mutability which is part of human living. We are guaranteed by the letter of Second Peter: **"Your entry into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for"** (2 Pt 1: 11).

The rhythm of Maine's autumn sings to our spirit. We join this chorus of praise. Listen! Don't you hear an echo of that eternal canticle we'll sing forever?

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