

# Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

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## DON'T SLIP ON THE ICE

In Maine each year, we live through an ice age. We greet its coming with a variety of expressions. Some of them are positive. " Great! Get out the skates." Ice fishing draws the brave who drag their small portable ice houses onto a frozen lake. They schedule hours of hopeful waiting for a catch.

Ice is a special creation of God that calls forth praise. Of course, sometimes it arouses laments. We have to respect its particular properties as designed by its Maker. Ice is less dense than water and so it can float. As liquid hardens into ice, it expands.

Psalms 147 declares, "God casts forth the ice like morsels. Before) His cold, the waters freeze." Then the lines go on, "He sends His word and melts them. He lets His breeze blow and the waters run" (17,18). If the psalmist had lived in Maine, he wouldn't have moved so rapidly to describe a quick melting.

We northern New Englanders repeat our own special chants of praise for a God Who bestows the particular challenge of descending temperatures. We nod in agreement with the doggerel lines, "Here comes ice./ It's very nice/ But at a price."

Everyone is a citizen of his or her changing world. Sometimes it makes us glad. Sometimes it makes us sad. Inhabitants of time and space, we have to learn to adjust. Growing up and then growing older, our bodies summon us to new experiences. The universe has its own laws and is not willing to repeal them at our vote.

Maine demands much adjustment to diversity. Each day brings a new scene, often quite unlike the day before. Spiritual writers urge us to advance beyond half-hearted acceptance of variations that do not please us. By willingly adapting to whatever differences we must face, we grow in spiritual maturity. St. John of the Cross offers this counsel, "Well and good if all things change, Lord God, provided we are rooted in You" (Saying of Light and Love, #34).

We ask God to give us fuller understanding of our situation as it from one phase to another so we may respond to the grace it contains. " Keep sound wisdom and discretion... Then you will securely go your way (Prv 3: 21,23). Moving rapidly over smooth ice can be an invigorating sport as long as we have ice skates beneath our feet.

Traversing an icy trail demands more careful planning. "Let your eyes look straight ahead and your glance be directly forward" (Pr 4:25). I walk along slowly.

Under my boots I have attached my Stabilicers, a wonderful product made in Biddeford, Maine. And I use a staff crafted by a skillful friend, Ernie. Ahead of me, her nose sniffing all the scents, lively hound Deirdre bounds forward. Sometimes I envy her four legs compared to my two.

An icy patch warns me to be cautious as I breathe in the bracing cold air. Jesus never set foot on Maine ice during his thirty-three earthly years, but now in His risen glory His footsteps walk with mine. "There is One Who can protect you from a fall and make you stand unblemished and exultant in the presence of His glory" (Jude 24). All natural phenomena serve as reminders of God soliciting our attention. They speak their own unique language.

We use them as metaphors in a variety of ways. An icy response to a request, an attitude that begins to freeze—these can apply the frozen atmosphere outside to some challenging human interactions. Just as we have to come to grips with the demands of the physical world, so must we deal with the society we live in. As disciples of Christ, we have been blessed with a power that energizes us for human encounters. "Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my savior" (Ps 25:5). St. Paul says, "Live according to what you have learned and accepted. Then will the God of peace be with you" (Phil 4:9).

A willingness to adjust—as we must in our winter season—to embrace whatever the future holds, does not come easily. In this present interval of time, Jesus is strengthening me for what lies ahead. Everything that will transpire carries the assurance of His help upon it. He gives me confidence for the struggles that may be demanded. In joy, He is present to increase my delight. In pain and weakness, I am never alone. St. Paul assures me, **"My God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19).**

Oh ice, creature of the One Who has also made me, I see you shining. I take in your message to travel onward with gladness—also with care and prudence.

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