

# Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

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## WINTER IS HERE

Winter may sometimes seem like a demanding visitor. This white-faced guest comes to Maine to stay for several months and offers us a variety of experiences no other season can provide. At times we're exasperated with Old Man Winter and just wish he would go away. At other times, he makes the cold air ring with the delighted cries of skaters and skiers. And makes for the concentrated silence of ice fishermen.

Take out the snowshoes, the sleds and toboggans. Make sure you have your woolen hat and mittens. Where are all the blankets I need? Oh, yes, just where I left them last year when the air turned warmer.

Taking a variety of forms as the thermometer rises and falls, icicles sparkle in the sunlit air. When we see them glistening from an overhanging roof, their crystal purity reminds us of the angels who sang at Jesus' birth. We walk on solid lakes, pressed firm by the descending temperatures.

Winter can offer an atmosphere of quiet peace—a chilled, hushed silence that brings forth poetry and prayer. The words of Sara Teasdale express what often take place in the hush of a frozen solitude.

**I stood beside a hill  
Smooth with new-laid snow,  
A single star looked out  
From the cold evening glow.**

**There was no other creature  
That saw what I could see--  
I stood and watched the evening star  
As long as it watched me.**

*February Twilight*

Prayer holds us in a peaceful awareness of the beauty poured out by a generous Creator. A mark of loving design appears in every snowflake. The pace of human living slows down. In the moonlit hush of the evening, Winter can seem so lovely that you almost ask him to stay forever. Almost. He is an expensive guest, alas, so that our final good-bye to him is really not all that reluctant. The fuel tank, so expensive to fill this year, is asking for more. The pile of logs is going down. Oak, elm, ash, and beech have been feeding hungry, hungry fireplaces and woodstoves. When spring starts sending its far-off messages about moving into Maine, nobody shouts, "Don't come. We've got Winter here and we don't want him to leave."

Before he departs, though, it's worthwhile to sit down with Mr. Winter and acknowledge all the good things he allows to happen. His raging tantrums with blizzard-tempo winds make him dangerous, and then nobody ventures to deal with

him at all. Better to stay indoors than engage him in an argument. But the days when gentle snow is falling, he seems to say, "Look how I have made everything beautiful. Each junk pile and each small heap of refuse I cover with whiteness so every jagged, dirty edge is softened and curved. Walk with me—carefully, of course— in the silence I make and taste the snappy air. Hear the crack of branches now and then."

As we thank God for taking us through the months of frost and ice without too many mishaps, our farewell to Winter should contain a bit of heartfelt praise. Not just the grudging kind we reserve for someone who comes along with periodic efficiency, knocking at the door to collect dues from us.

The Psalmist knew chilly weather though probably not as cold as he would have shivered through in Maine. **"God spreads snow like wool; frost God strews like morsels...Before the cold the waters freeze"** (Ps 147: 16,17). Shakespeare's phrase "the winter of our discontent" is frequently quoted. But not so often by Mainers. We know how to make the most of Winter's chilly presence and are more than contented with the many possibilities opened up for us.

Lord of all the seasons and their Creator, open our eyes to what You have put of Yourself in each changing sky. Help us to shake hands with every season in a friendly way. Enlarge our perceptions so we can grasp more of You. In every breath, warm or cold, You are there.

**Sister Margaret Dorgan, DCM**