

November A Month Of Remembrance - by Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM

"This reflection appeared first in *The Church World*, the diocesan weekly of Maine. More of these meditations will be offered on a regular basis."

[<<Hub](#)

© copyright 2004 by S. Margaret Dorgan, DCM

NOVEMBER: A MONTH OF REMEMBRANCE

With a touching insistence, the month of November reminds us of those who have left the world we still inhabit. Their voices do not sound in our ears as we once heard them, but memories of them speak to our hearts. They fulfilled their allotted years on earth and now exist where time no longer dominates. "The just live forever and in the Lord is their recompense and the thought of them is with the Most High" (Wisdom 5:15).

The passing of those we love emphasizes the reality that everyone's human journey is moving forward. We are never fixed in any temporal moment. Time will always give way to the next instant.

We can look upon our life in this world as a pilgrimage, and a pilgrimage always means we are headed for a place it is good for us to reach. At first, we start out unaware that we are pilgrims. Infants are fussy travelers. Every day they make further progress. They have to. The physical body changes. The ongoing months won't let us remain babies or young children or adolescents. Time pushes us—advances us ahead. Was there a place where you would have liked time to stop? Maybe when you were nineteen? Twenty-five? Thirty? Well, earthly life won't let us stay young, won't let us come to a halt at middle age. Time inevitably opens the door to the final chapters of ageing.

There are those of us who never reach that far into time. The pilgrimage ends for some earlier, maybe much earlier. Children die and we ask why. So soon. Why? Vibrant youths stop breathing. Why? Today recurring images of violence remind us of the fragility of all who dwell in this world. Starvation threatens in many places. We cannot but feel we are dealing with a surplus of grieving.

In the ordinary course of events, death comes more frequently as years add on to years. Elderly travelers finish their journey. It has been a longer one, but it too comes to a conclusion. Then the pilgrimage is over and the pilgrim is at rest in the sanctuary of eternity.

Knowing that my earthly passage is only temporary can be a blessed realization. How so? How is that knowing a blessed knowledge? Because it forces me to recognize I am bound to something that is fleeting, that carries me along, whether I want it to or not, that I have to move from where I am now to where I'll be the next hour, the next day, the next week. And all the hours and days are taking me, the pilgrim, to a final destination. I am making my way not to a foreign land but to a sacred meeting place where God awaits.

At the introduction to *The Spiritual Canticle*, St. John of the Cross describes the reality of earthly life. The soul observes, he says, "that life is short...that all comes to an end and falls like falling water, and that the time is uncertain" (Stanza 1:1, p. 477,8). He is pointing out what all people have to acknowledge whether they are believers, agnostics, or atheists. Life is short and inevitably reaches its conclusion.

But we human beings aren't just carried along by this stream of change. We have the remarkable power to choose what to make of the years granted to us. Not everything. You can't just opt to be a millionaire or famous. But you can choose to make this temporal life assigned to you worthy of a divine destiny. Human lives can settle for mud or reach for the stars. And in the order of spirituality, the very stars bend down to us, inviting our choice. What we select makes all the difference. This decision wakes us up to the reality of ourselves as creatures designed for greatness, even for God-likeness. Jesus our Savior helps us choose to live in the company of the One Who made us, a God Who invites us to rejoice in being loved with an all-embracing infinite love.

To decide to live with and for God transforms the world we dwell in. As St. John shows us, everything is reaching out, speaking words to capture our hearts. John explains, "God created all things...and in them left some trace of Who God is...making them beautiful in a wonderful order" (*The Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 5:1, p. 496).

The dear departed send us a message to find in each transient moment the fullness it encloses. **"The Spirit we have received is not the world's spirit but God's Spirit, helping us to recognize the gifts God has given us"** (1 Cor 2:12).

Sister Margaret Dorgan, DCM