

WINTER WISDOM

by Jean Glaraton

"Lent offers the opportunity to dig deeper, revisit where you might be 'stuck,' and to reflect on how and when you might need to show mercy to yourself—that kind and forgiving treatment you show others and ask for from God." Reflection on Compassionate Mercy, 2016

In parts of the world where winter means weeks of subzero temperatures, snow, and ice, the warmth of the sun and a deep breath of fresh air are luxuries. Yet with the right clothing, winter gear, and intentions, most people living in these climates manage to get outside anyway. It's vital to counteract the negative effects of winter and to refresh our spirits.

On a recent morning when I was feeling rather depleted, I bundled up and headed out for a walk. The further I went, the more reenergized I felt. My thoughts turned from the misery I was feeling to how I could find value in the harshness of winter. I looked at the trees standing bare and saw a future of green. I saw empty spaces where buried roots will soon rise up and fill the landscape with colorful flowers. I felt the hope of winter, knowing we are promised spring. The dormancy of winter can be restorative. Muscles grow stronger by being stretched, the resulting tears leading to healing. So too can we grow stronger when our resources are stretched.

Sometimes we need to be gentle and patient with ourselves. Other times we must "bundle up" and keep moving. We grow stronger by being stretched, even in the harshest of winters and the most challenging aspects of life. We can use these times to reconnect with God, with our true selves, with each other, and with our prayer life. Those bare trees? Their energy is being renewed from within and will emerge to make them stronger than ever. Whatever winter we are enduring, we can find hope, knowing that our spring is coming and we too will come out of it stronger than ever.

What can you add to your Lenten practice this year to "bundle up" and "dig deeper?"

In what areas of your life are you seeking change?

Be patient with all things, but most of all with yourself. St. Francis de Sales

Almighty God, we come to you in the dormancy of winter, seeking hope and the promise of spring. Guide our practice. Replenish our spirit. Fill our cups, that we might grow closer to You. Help us remain patient and strong. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

