

Autumn Reflection—2015
By Sister Peg Spindler, CSA

“The summer ends, and it is time to face another way,” wrote Wendell Berry. When S. Joyce asked me to do a reflection on autumn for today, I went back to a poem I wrote a few years ago. With your kind permission, I share a few small thoughts with you within the framework of that poem.

**I wanted fall more brilliant this year
in its painting
to stave off browner colors of death,
to give wisdom to each leaf, each life,
to wish for each and all a blaze of Glory
in the *transitus*.**

It is autumn and it catches our breath with its beauty. But amidst the awesome beauty of Fall, we do sense a chill in autumn and it's not just the chill in our bones. It's not just the approach of Winter.

We sense the dyings of each day more clearly, more acutely. Each Autumn we sense more deeply the fragility of all life, the vulnerability of our wonderful bodies and the seeming finality of our mortality.

We each hope for our moment in the sun, our claim to fame, our legacy before our passing. At least I know I do.

**I wanted fall more brilliant this year
in its sunshine
to believe a meaning in my own living,
to grieve a reason into my own dying,
to save just one from self-destruction
or oblivion.**

Isn't it true that we all want to live on somehow, in someone's memory? I know I want my life to have meant something, to have made a difference.

There are all too many even in our own families and neighborhoods who die too young or who seemingly ruin their lives in some way. We wish we could have saved them, to have helped them see their own immense worth. I think of the all too many who fill mass graves somewhere or lie at the bottom of some ocean--lives, as far as we can tell, unfulfilled.

Yet our faith teaches us that each life, each leaf, is inherently filled with meaning in the bigger picture none of us can completely see. Everything flows on into something new.

**I wanted fall more brilliant this year
in every way.**

**Ha! Its muted somber tones and grey tearful skies
Drown me in my fears, and
I am *afraid* of Fall this year—
Its whispers are all too clear.**

The Fall during which I wrote this poem was very grey and rainy and somber. But not just weather-wise. I was in the middle of a huge transition in my life and I experienced it almost physically as a dying.

It was too early in the process for me to see the rising that would come and it was so very hard to feel the wrenching good-byes, the total shift in my worldview and circumstances.

Actual dying was way too close for comfort and I was afraid. Was this the way it would be to go to my grave? Was there any beauty at all in death?

But,

**The geese call so incessantly, and
point the way collectively
to letting go, to letting go.
They must know, they *do* know
that brilliance isn't hues of Fall.**

A blaze of Glory is not how most of us live our lives.

There are all those letting goes of living—watching our five year old take on the first day of kindergarten, hearing our sons and daughters say “I do”; experiencing our best friends move away; having a hand in something as it gets up and running and then handing it on to another; losing our favorite grandmother; feeling the first twinges of arthritis; watching a loved one disappear into Alzheimer’s.

Letting goes are not always blazing, but are the stuff of life, deeper and richer life—Isn't that the Glory of God?

**Brilliance is courage in the Falling,
colored by which graces,
fading into scents of peace,**

As Mary Anne Radmacher once stated: Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."

By each day's graced dyings, we can move more surely into peace and the next day; we learn to honor the dyings that slowly transform us.

**and,
dancing, twirling on the Wind, so
madly loving sap and branch and
hiding robin's eggs,**

Moving into that peace, we find the deep joy that Jesus described, that joy which cannot be taken away from us.

We can live the lives we have, loving who we are in this present moment, even
loving what we do each day—like the leaves which love
'hiding robin's eggs' and "twirling on the Wind"

yet

**freely joining in the mulching.
God, oh help my un-be-leafing;
heaven's Spring awaits her sprouting!**

Each day, like leaves, we can leap or, perhaps more accurately, limp into the Wind with courage and good humor.

Despite our fears of letting go, of the little and large dyings in our lives and at the end of our lives, we somehow know and some days manage to believe that on the other side of each “mulching”, each winter of transformation, there is morning, there is rising,

there are green leaves and flowers again!