



**1. A season of the year.**

A time of cold, rain, storms, short days and less sunshine. There is bareness and apparent deadness. Yet, it has its own beauty and provides enjoyment for those who revel in winter sports like skiing and snowboarding.

In the “dead” trees, life is preparing to burst forth in springtime: in the bare ground, bulbs are getting ready to root and shoot. There’s a lot going on that is invisible to us. Winter reminds us that death leads to resurrection.

*WINTER PRESENT*

*It's been too cold today to spend much time outside,  
though from behind glass I've read  
your message in the winter landscape.  
Bare branches move gently  
against a pearl grey sky,  
with a band of brightness where the hidden sun  
has found a thinness in the clouds.  
Some sprays of early blossom  
try to make believe that spring is here.  
Soon it will be.  
The cycle of the seasons turns.  
I say, "I don't like winter.  
Only three more weeks to spring!"  
But when I stop to look  
I see the beauty of bareness  
and sense the mystery of dying and rising.  
Trees are revealed in their essential forms  
and grass grows velvet green.  
I say, "This is lovely."  
I stop wanting to fast-forward time,  
and receive with gratitude what you are giving now.*

*(Sr. Avrill)*



## **2. Interior winter.**

We suffer depression, grief, hard times of relationship breakdown, loss of employment, etc. These are the times we need God most but often God seems far away. This is only apparent because God's right there, in the midst of the situation, waiting to meet us.

Though these winters are never welcome, if we let them, they can become occasions of growth and learning. They have something to teach us, though it takes courage to look for it. Not at the time but sometimes afterwards we can look back at them and be thankful.

### *LIFE LESSONS*

*Joy and sorrow have taught me so much,  
and I am still learning.*

*At first I thought that sorrow  
was just something to be endured,  
numbly, dumbly,  
until it passed—it if ever did.*

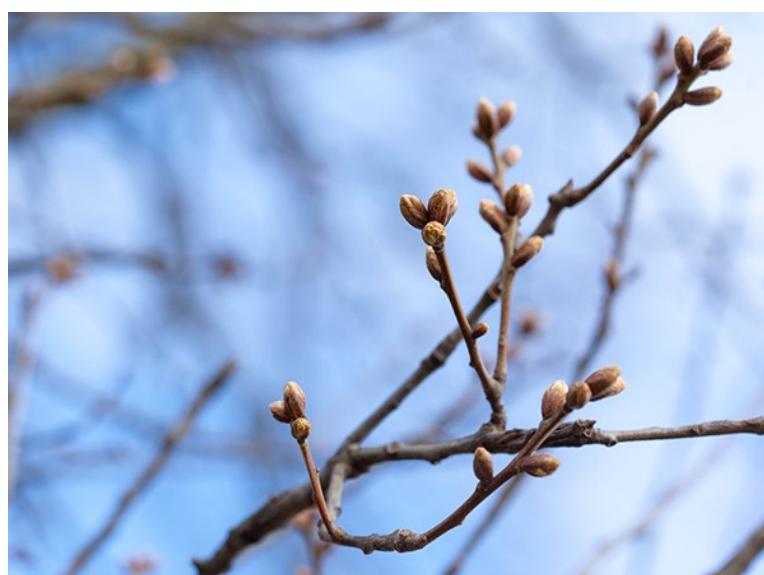
*Then I discovered it to be  
the womb and nurturer of new life,  
the breaking up of the ground  
in readiness for spring growth.  
But I still had much to learn,  
because when it passed I thought,  
"Thank goodness that's over."*

*I expected joy from then on  
to be my natural state.  
But of course it wasn't.  
New sorrows came,  
and new joys.*

*Like the year, my life has seasons,  
and each one has its place and purpose.  
Each teaches me the lesson I need at the time,  
and together they help me to grow.*

*I understand this,  
but it's not always easy to accept  
when my soul is in the depths of winter.*

*(Sr. Avrill)*



### 3. Winter of life

The last stage of life. Some of us are there, some approaching, some still have some way to go. This stage is marked by obvious signs, of white/grey hair, wrinkles. and not so obvious signs, of stiff, painful joints, less energy, reduced sight and hearing. But there are positives too: we have gained a wealth of experience and wisdom. Each age has its tasks and there are special tasks which belong to our winter.

It is a time for getting our lives in order, dealing with unfinished business, and reconciliation. As we become less physically active there's more time to deepen our relationship with God, to let God's gift of peace flow through us, to pray for those on our hearts, to become more contemplative as we prepare ourselves to live in God's presence.

#### THE WINTER OF LIFE

(Mary Down Brine: 1816-1913)

*As down the frosty road we came,  
My man and I together,  
We talked of this, and smiled at that.,  
Nor felt the chilling weather.  
For side by side we trudged along,  
Each thought the other sharing,  
And in each other's company  
The wintry breezes daring.*

*The sky above was cold and gray,  
The earth below was dreary,  
But home was near, and love was warm,  
Altho' the way seemed weary.  
John had but me, I had but John,  
Life's twilight skies to brighten,  
But every sorrow we had borne,  
Some blessing came to lighten.*

*We passed the hillside on our way,  
Where 'neath the sod were sleeping  
The four dear children God had spared  
But shortly to our keeping.  
We looked that way with wistful eyes,  
Tear-dimmed with sudden yearning,  
As backward o'er the lapse of time  
Our hearts-our thoughts-were turning.*

*"Dear soul, cheer up!" John softly said,  
"They only wait above us!  
Are we not glad no parting waits  
Us here for those that love us?"  
Into his dear old face I looked,  
No longer then repining;  
For John had me, and I had John;  
Love's sunbeams still were shining.*



*The summer joys long since were past  
And winter's snows were o'er us;  
The twilight sky was cold and drear,  
And night was just before us.  
But though the way so weary seemed,  
Yet John and I were merry:  
For said I not that home was near?  
And hearts and thoughts grew cheery.*

*And thinking o'er that walk today-  
When John and I together,  
Side close by side, came down the road,  
All thro' the frosty weather-  
I think of how, life's journey trod,  
With trust forsaken never,  
We've nearly reached at night that home  
Where dwelleth rest forever.*