

Spring Comes
February 2008

February. The waiting-around month. It's not January, the time to get in financial and physical shape month. It's not March, the let's attack the garden month. It's not December, the Christmas is coming month or even October, the hanging on month. It's February, that rainy, gray waiting around for spring, for the rains to stop, for sun, for life to get better month.

A few things went on this month: there was the Super Bowl where who wears the football crown was determined. Statistics show criminals actually take the day off on Super Bowl Sunday! There was the Westminster Dog Show in NYC, the "Super Bowl of dog shows," which has been around for over 120 years. There was Groundhog Day, a reminder that spring is about six weeks off; Mardi Gras, that "Fat Tuesday" carnival for feasting and self-indulgence before Ash Wednesday; and President's Day, this year an apt reminder as we all struggle with our presidential choices. We mustn't forget Valentines Day, but even that commercialized day has lost some of its luster compared to the days of our youth when we carefully cut out our valentines from construction paper, decorated boxes with lace doilies, and waited for someone to drop in a valentine telling us they loved us or at least had a passing thought about us.

During this waiting around month we do have time. Time to read facts like "Over eight million tons of trees are consumed each year in the production of paper catalogs." Or "The production and disposal of direct mail alone consumes more energy than three million cars." Or "1,500 is the average number of miles produce travels from farm to table in the United States." Now those are uplifting facts. February does give us time to

get prepared. The time to have an emergency supply kit is not when the tsunami is bearing down on us; the time to get in physical shape is not when a mugger is chasing us down the street; the time to develop a spiritual muscle is not when the first tragedy in life knocks us flat; the time to accumulate friends is not when we wake up one morning and discover we have none.

Life has its own rhythms and circles. In a book I'm reading, *A Year of Spirituality*, "Letting go of Sadness" is the name of an opening chapter. A winter of grief seems to be an apt description for some of us--long dark days of rain, wild raging storms, freezing sleet, moonless nights. Huge trees topple in the forest--uprootedness is everywhere. Those with seasonal affective disorder pine for a slant of sun, and some of us grieve the losses of loved ones, the diminishing of our beloved pets, the abandonment of dreams. The losses pile up.

But the squirrels keep squirreling away as they always do, digging up the dirt in my pots on the deck, storing away for a hopeful future. The forsythia and quince bud once again, the daffodils, like always, push up through the soil.

And one day the rain stops, the sun comes out, the breeze warms. And there, in the midst of winter, in the pale monochromatic palette of landscape, a flash of orange appears at the bird feeder—a varied thrush. Yellow crocuses blossom under the hemlock, and the red dynasty tulips jump an inch every day. In my window, amazingly, a crimson orchid bloom returns after a two-year hiatus. And in distant Arizona, my two-year old grandson remembers me, after all, and on the phone calls me Nana. *Nana in my ear!* he says to his dad. I smile. Spring comes and the grass grows by itself.