

sound that always left my heart feeling a bit sad and a bit glad. Geese speak to the part of me that knows transition and change are necessary, that leaving secure situations is an essential part of growth. When I hear flocks of geese call and see their patterned flight, they encourage me to allow myself to stretch and to grow. There is also a part of me that fills with nostalgia. My spirit cries out to them: "Friends!" The flight of geese helps me to recall all the blessings that change and transition have meant for my own growth and all the special people who have walked through my heart because I have moved on. The migration of geese, and all birds, deepens the belief in me to keep traveling the inner roads when I would rather not go.

Frost: One winter morning I awoke to see magnificent lines of frost stretching across my window panes. They seemed to rise with the sunshine and the bitter cold outside. They looked like little miracles that had been formed in the dark of night. I watched them in sheer amazement and marveled that such beautiful forms could be born during such a winter-cold night. Yet, as I pondered them I thought of how life is so like that. We live our long, worn days in the shadows, in what often feels like barren, cold winter, so unaware of the miracles that are being created in our spirits. It takes the sudden daylight, some unexpected surprise of life, to cause our gaze to look upon a simple, stunning growth that has happened quietly inside us. Like frost designs on a winter window, they bring us beyond life's fragmentation and remind us that we are not nearly as lost as we thought we were, that all the time we thought we were dead inside, beautiful things were being born in us.

Kinship

Another valuable bonding is that which I have named "kinship." Kinship is not just another word for friendship,

community or kinfolk. It may be all of those things combined and yet none of those things alone. Kinship is a rich bondedness that calls forth to the deepest part of ourselves. It is a mutuality of understanding, a sense of belonging, a union of spirits, a loving appreciation and a deep communion which comes from having known experiences similar to the person with whom we are bonded.

Kinship confirms our own journey and gives hope to our struggles. It encourages us to "hang in there" when the going gets particularly difficult or overwhelming. Kinship nourishes us in our empty places and tells us that the dreams which we think we have lost have not died. When we experience kinship there is a mutuality of understanding on a mind and a heart level. Something deep inside us connects profoundly with something deep inside the other. It is like recognizing a part of ourselves that we thought no one knew or could understand in such an accepting and knowing way.

Empathy and compassion are also a part of kinship. We can feel with the other and the other can feel with us. No words need be spoken. The solidarity of spirit is a loving resonance that speaks for itself. A union of spirits develops when one feels a value or a truth connected with the other who seems to walk some of the same inner footsteps of our own story of life. It is as if the vision in our own being meets the vision in another and something in us lights up in recognition, knowing that it is heard and accepted.

Kinship is deep communion that carries strength across many miles. We may not see each other often but we know and believe in the bondedness that exists. We draw strength from just knowing that the other is there and that she or he understands, that we can draw energy from one another in our time of need and return it just as generously when the time is called forth.

One day while reflecting on the gospel scene of John 19:25-27, the truth about kinship in the midst of suffering