

## Roses in November

One of the joys in Bethany, which is the house where the Sisters live, is that roses come peeping in the windows. Those of us who were brought up in cities where houses were crammed together in rows rarely caught a glimpse of a rose and there must be many living like that today. Of all the flowers and we have many in our beautiful garden, the roses are the most beautiful: pure white, deep red, cream and pink, they blossom in abundance.

However this last summer they took a beating. Winds swept in from the Irish Sea breaking branches and rain like downpours we had never seen before came straight down in sheets with ferocity. The flowers, wilted and sodden with water, fell off the bush. It looked as if they would never come again.



One rambler rose with an abundance of delicate pink flowers just outside our windows looked a sorry sight. A mid-season pruning had to take place to remove broken branches. Weeks went by and there was no sign of a flower. Then suddenly in September the bush burst into bloom again. It gave even more joy because it had come through the storms so it seemed more beautiful and precious than ever. As you read this in November roses will still be blossoming in our garden.

We too can take a beating sometimes in life. Circumstances threaten to overwhelm us. Perhaps, to others looking on we seem a sorry sight! We certainly feel it ourselves. Does good ever come out of suffering? For those who love God, it does. Suffering tends to sort out our priorities. It separates our wants from our needs. We learn to love and show love. We are slow sometimes to tell someone that we love them until we realise that one day they may not be there for us to say it. When we realise that life is as fragile as a rose in a storm it changes our perspective. We become more thankful for little kindnesses, more aware of the debt of gratitude we owe to others. Yet much of this is how we should be living anyway as Christians.

It was C.H Spurgeon who said, "Grace grows best in winter". Often, we don't see it until afterwards. Our independent natures and confidence in self begin to wither and without us realising it, a pruning has taken place. Suffering humbles us. We may be in a November fog unable to understand all that has happened, or is happening to us, but there is One with nail prints in his hands and feet reaching out to us.

"When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
Then your touch can call us back to life again,  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green."

J. M. C. Crum

Others will gather roses from the lives of those who have suffered and found Christ in their suffering, a rose called compassion and understanding and another, called gentleness.