

around the year

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SEASONS AND THE CHRISTIAN YEAR



THE SNOW WALKERS

by John Burroughs

AN EXCERPT FROM *WINTER SUNSHINE* (1876)

How rarely we see squirrels in winter! The naturalists say they are mostly torpid; yet evidently that little pocket-faced depredator, the chipmunk, was not carrying buckwheat for so many days to his hole for nothing: Was he anticipating a state of torpidity, or providing against the demands of a very active appetite? Red and gray squirrels are more or less active all winter, though very shy, and, I am inclined to think, partially nocturnal in their habits. Here a gray one has just passed,—came down that tree and went up this; there he dug for a beechnut, and left the burr on the snow. How did he know where to dig? During an unusually severe winter I have known him to make long journeys to a barn, in a remote field, where wheat was stored. How did he know there was wheat there? In attempting to return, the adventurous creature was frequently run down and caught in the deep snow.

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From the Editor's Desk

February 1, 2017

Dear Readers:

It might sound crazy to my fellow New Englanders, but February is one of my favorite months. I think it's because two of my favorite feast days occur back-to-back, right at the beginning of February: **The Feast of St. Brigid of Ireland** on the 1st, followed by the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, also known as **Candlemas**, on the 2nd. Of course, feast days are all about the food, and what I love the most about preparing these special dishes is their cyclical nature. I try only to make the feast food on the feast day, and no other time of the year—despite repeated requests for Candlemas pancakes, I hold my ground!

The Feast of St. Valentine on the 14th is also a special day in February. I'm far too practical to expect dozens of roses, but in my house we do love making homemade valentines. All you need is some basic supplies and some imagination! For inspiration, see last February's newsletter (visit AroundtheYear.org/newsletters and click on February 2016).

When I read "**The Snow Walkers**," the John Burroughs selection that starts off this newsletter, I knew I had to share it with all of you. Being an undisputed squirrel-aficionado, I was greatly amused by Burroughs' observations about squirrel behavior. I hope you enjoy them, too!

This month's newsletter also features **St. Scholastica**, whose feast day occurs each year on February 10th. She was the sister of St. Benedict and shared his love of monastic life (see page 6).

I guess we had better start working on our Valentine's Day cards—we have less than two weeks to go until the special day! If you celebrate any holidays or feast days this month, be sure to share them with us at **Facebook.com/AroundtheYear.org**.

Kelli Ann Wilson, Editor
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Coming to *around the year* in March:
Ideas for celebrating Lent with children & more!



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His home is in the trunk of some old birch or maple, with an entrance far up amid the branches. In the spring he builds himself a summer-house of small leafy twigs in the top of a neighboring beech, where the young are reared and much of the time is passed. But the safer retreat in the maple is not abandoned, and both old and young resort thither in the fall, or when danger threatens. Whether this temporary residence amid the branches is for elegance or pleasure, or for sanitary reasons or domestic convenience, the naturalist has forgotten to mention.

The elegant creature, so cleanly in its habits, so graceful in its

carriage, so nimble and daring in its movements, excites feelings of admiration akin to those awakened by the birds and the fairer forms of nature. His passage through the trees is almost a flight. Indeed, the flying squirrel has little or no advantage over him, and in speed and nimbleness cannot compare with him at all. If he miss his footing and fall, he is sure to catch on the next branch; if the connection be broken, he leaps recklessly for the nearest spray or limb, and secures his hold, even if it be by the aid of his teeth.

His career of frolic and festivity begins in the fall, after the birds have left us and the holiday spirit of nature has commenced to subside. How absorbing the

pastime of the sportsman who goes to the woods in the still October morning in quest of him! You step lightly across the threshold of the forest, and sit down upon the first log or rock to await the signals. It is so still that the ear suddenly seems to have acquired new powers, and there is no movement to confuse the eye. Presently you hear the rustling of a branch, and see it sway or spring as the squirrel leaps from or to it; or else you hear a disturbance in the dry leaves, and mark one running upon the ground. He has probably seen the intruder, and, not liking his stealthy movements, desires to avoid a nearer acquaintance. Now he mounts a stump to see if the way

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is clear, then pauses a moment at the foot of a tree to take his bearings, his tail, as he skims along, undulating behind him, and adding to the easy grace and dignity of his movements. Or else you are first advised of his proximity by the dropping of a false nut, or the fragments of the shucks rattling upon the leaves. Or, again, after contemplating you awhile unobserved, and making up his mind that you are not dangerous, he strikes an

attitude on a branch, and commences to quack and bark, with an accompanying movement of his tail. Late in the afternoon, when the same stillness reigns, the same scenes are repeated. There is a black variety, quite rare, but mating freely with the gray, from which he seems to be distinguished only in color.

There is something very human in this apparent mirth and mockery of the squirrels. It seems to be a sort of ironical laughter,

and implies self-conscious pride and exultation in the laughter. "What a ridiculous thing you are, to be sure!" he seems to say; "how clumsy and awkward, and what a poor show for a tail! Look at me, look at me!"—and he capers about in his best style. Again, he would seem to tease you and provoke your attention; then suddenly assumes a tone of good-natured, childlike defiance and derision.

—J.B.



QUOTE

The February sunshine steeps your boughs and tints the buds and swells the leaves within.

—William C. Bryant



Who Loves the Trees Best?

Who loves trees best?

"I," said the spring,
"Their leaves so beautiful
To them I bring."

Who loves the trees best?

"I," summer said,
"I give them blossoms,
White, yellow, red."

Who loves the trees best?

"I," said the fall,
"I give luscious fruits,
Bright tints to all!"

Who loves the trees best?

"I love them best,"
Harsh winter answered,
"I give them rest."

Old Winter

by Thomas Noel

Old Winter sad, in snow yclad
Is making a doleful din;
But let him howl till he crack his jowl,
We will not let him in.
Ay, let him lift from the billowy drift
His hoary, haggard form,
And scowling stand, with his wrinkled hand
Outstretching to the storm.
And let his weird and sleety beard
Stream loose upon the blast,
And, rustling, chime to the tinkling rime
From his bald head falling fast.
Let his baleful breath shed blight and death
On herb and flower and tree;
And brooks and ponds in crystal bonds
Bind fast, but what care we?



I ASKED MY GOD AND HE DID LISTEN: CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF SAINT SCHOLASTICA

The Feast of **Saint Scholastica** is celebrated each year on February 10th. Scholastica was born about 480 A.D. in Nursia, Italy. She was the twin sister of St. Benedict (his feast day is July 11th).

Unlike her brother, whose religious aspirations appeared when he was a about 20 years old, Scholastica knew from a very early age that she was meant to consecrate her life to God. After Benedict established his Order in Monte Cassino, Scholastica set about founding a monastery of nuns in nearby Plombariola.

Because of the relatively close proximity of their monasteries (about five miles apart), it is said that Benedict and Scholastica would meet up occasionally to worship, pray, and discuss various texts. It is also reported that, near the end of one of these visits, as Benedict was

getting ready to return to Monte Cassino, his sister begged him to stay and continue their conversation. Wanting to remain faithful to his own rules, Benedict refused her offer and said he must return to his cell. Suddenly, a great storm appeared, making travel impossible. Benedict asked his sister, "What have you done?", to which she replied, "I asked you and you would not listen; so I asked my God and he did listen. So now go off, if you can, leave me and return to your monastery."

Of course, Benedict could not return because of the raging storm, so he stayed and talked through the night. Three days later Scholastica died—some accounts say that Benedict witnessed her soul rising to heaven from his cell. Scholastica is the patroness of nuns, and is invoked against storms and rain.

—K.W.

Collect for the Feast of Saint Scholastica

O Lord,
who made Saint Scholastica
resplendent
with the brightness of an
incomparable purity,
grant that we may please you
by the transparency of our daily lives
and, by faithfulness in the school of
your service,
be found worthy of praising you in
heaven
with all the angels and saints.
We make our prayer through our
Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the
unity of the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever.

Source: Order of St. Benedict, www.OSB.org

FEBRUARY 2017

(A) Anglican/Episcopalian; (R)
Roman Catholic

February 1st: St. Brigid of Ireland, patroness of babies, blacksmiths, dairy workers, and midwives (A)(R)

February 2nd: PRESENTATION OF JESUS AT THE TEMPLE
(Candlemas) (A)(R)

February 4th: Feast of St. Blaise, patron of animals, builders, and those suffering diseases of the throat (R)

February 5th: FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY and Feast of St. Agatha, patroness of bakers and those with breast cancer (R)

February 10th: Feast of St. Scholastica, twin sister of St. Benedict, and patroness of nuns (A)(R)

February 12th: SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

February 14th: Feast of St. Valentine, patron of engaged couples, bee keepers, and love (A)(R)

February 18th: Feast of St. Bernadette, patroness of shepherds and those ridiculed for their faith (R)

February 19th: SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

February 26th: LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Visit AroundtheYear.org for more photos, crafts, recipes, and ideas for celebrating the natural seasons and the Christian year.

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I'm always looking for individuals who might be interested in contributing to *around the year* (both the website and the newsletters). If you would like to contribute, please contact me! kelli@aroundtheyear.org

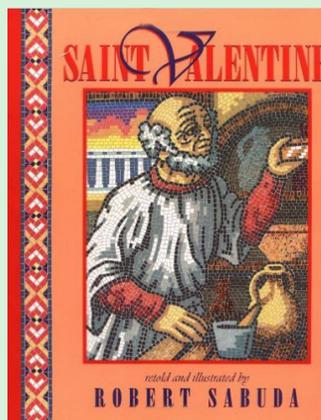


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Recommended Reading

CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY



Saint Valentine, written and illustrated by Robert Sabuda

From the publisher:

How did Valentine's Day, one of our most popular holidays, begin?

It started in ancient Rome when a kind physician named Valentine took an interest in a young blind girl. With his healing skill and his deep faith he restored her sight. What we now call Valentine's Day began when he sent the little girl a secret message, which

she received after the Christian martyr was executed. For this tale rich in sentiment, master illustrator Robert Sabuda has created exquisite paper mosaics to suggest early Christian art that resonate with both subtlety and power.

The Valentine Bears, written by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Jan Brett

From the publisher:

Mr. and Mrs. Bear have never celebrated St. Valentine's Day because they hibernate in winter. But this year Mrs. Bear decides things will be different, so she sets her alarm clock for February 14th.

