

OCTOBER ENDS

THE paving stones are slippery. Take brooms,
 Primitive besoms, bound up of scratchy twigs.
 The leaves are pulped, so flattened to the flags
 You have to scrape them off. This season grooms
 Flesh from the bone, and all that's meaningful
 In kinship and the perished covenant
 Made in the spring. Scrape, if you do not want
 October to end in slime and a cracked skull.

Dark time of year and a cold time for the soul,
 The infant of fire burns not in our five senses.
 We have spent ourselves and who pays our expenses?
 What kindling is there that will make us whole?
 The elderly come teetering on in black,
 The stems of love, bent but not broken yet.
 They have petitions. They will not forget.
 Rip wide the heavens and come back, come back.

I would pray for you too, my dead, but with what words?
 Once we had symbols, poor ones, they sufficed.
 A boundless meadow where the shepherd Christ
 Milked all blessedness into a gift of curds.
 That was in Carthage, a primitive period,
 The girl a visionary. Visionaries,
 I put my dead, doll-like in images,
 In the enclosure of your prayers and blood.

Surely his mercy circumscribes his anger.
 The lick of fire under the oily smoke
 Was ambivalent. Who listened while he spoke
 Heard something deeper than the words, a hunger.
 Our voices reach and, though they have no ring,
 We babble with the words we have to babble.
 October ends in mush where sparrows scabble.
 We must begin again from the heats of spring.

BENET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.