



Autumn is such a beautiful season. Yet some people dread it, and sense a prelude to some kind of lonely final chapter of life. Did not Oscar Wilde and others make the gloomy prediction: *"You will die alone"*? That is an understandably troubling concern for seniors, or people of any age with medical challenges. Well, Wilde & Co. were wrong! So enjoy the season. We all need it!

I freely admit I am besotted with the life and poems of Issa. Many of you climbed on that bandwagon yourselves earlier this year by sending haiku poems for a memorial book to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Issa's birth. He was very aware of the

implications of the winds of autumn. Issa's famous book *Oraga Haru* ("The Year of My Life") largely related to death — especially his young daughter's and his own. Issa was a realist but he saw life, and death, as unfolding within a community of existence. Think on this poem:

*Like me,
my pine tree is bent with age ...
autumn dusk.*

We are all in this journey together. You and me. Us and the old pine trees. It may be a somber time but we are NOT alone.

Two memories of children come to me as I write these words:

A seven-year-old girl dying from the complications of AIDS said, "Remember me at the parties." Everyone in that crowded hospital room has remembered.

On another occasion, I pointed out to a slightly older boy that the Mayfly he was watching would only live one day. He thought for a long-moment and then said, "That must be how the whales think of us."

Patience for one more Issa thought?

*O winds of autumn!
Blow us closer to the Buddha.*

And a closing thought from me?

*Napping with the cat
on an autumn afternoon.
Somewhere wind-chimes ring.*

We never have to be alone. Leaves and the sounds of bells travel on the autumn wind — and so do we all.

BROTHER TOBY