



In many cultures there are celebrations of life at this or similar times of year. For those who grew up in a Christian heritage that season is often “Lent” which is the Anglo-Saxon word for “Spring.” If you are old enough, you'll remember it can be a rather gloomy time of fasting and penance. Today the issue in many places, including Starcross, is to use this time to examine and deepen the essential values of our spiritual life. For some of us that means an increased awareness of the gospel messages concerning justice and peace.

Like our Buddhist brothers and sisters in what some call their “Buddhist Lent”, we attempt to become particularly mindful of all forms of new life. We try to take a period of time each day to simply open ourselves to the beauty and sacredness of life around us. That is especially easy for us this year as we await in a few days the birth of a child to our daughter Holly and her husband Lance. We remember Holly's own birth and the fear we had because, according to testing procedures available then, she was HIV+. In time we were able to verify that she was not infected. The years that followed have been a potent story of life and joy coming out of dark shadows.

Another practice we have here is to reflect each day on one section of Chapter 4 of *The Rule of St. Benedict* which largely restates the “works of mercy” found in the Gospels. A number of years ago Brother Toby arranged most of these in very short reflections, one for each day of the week. He also posts the appropriate section beside the door we use when we go up to the chapel. The task for each of us is to do something that day which advances these objectives in our own lives and society. As in the past, some of you have asked to have these reflections in a convenient form to download. The following link contains the reflections for each day of the week. It would be very pleasant for us to believe that we were joined by others each day.

[Tools For Good Works](#)

Like so many others, we attempt to use these days before the very active times of life (which for us means planting, writing, traveling

to Africa, etc.) to find more opportunities for reflection and quiet. This Lent we are also committed to alleviating some of the hunger in the many underserved homes around us by jumping through all the hoops necessary to open a pantry in our barn to provide food with dignity at least a few times each month from now on.

Our Jewish sisters and brothers use the greeting and wish each Shabbat, *Shabbat Shalom* – May it be a Sabbath of Peace. In the same sense I wish all of you who walk a Lenten path this year — *May it be a Lent of Peace.*

Sister Marti

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