



Little beings connect us to the real world. Baby Damien and my cat Tigger know nothing about the “important” things that occupy my day and mind. Occasionally they lead me to a simpler place — if I let them. At those times they are important anchors to keep me from drifting into turbulent waters.

At night as I look back on the events of the day and ask myself which of those things I would have wanted to do if it had been the last day of my life. What do I treasure? Watching Damien lock his eyes on his mother’s eyes. Sitting beside Tigger and gazing out into nothing — or was it everything?

Trees. Both Damien and Tigger can intrude into my space with

voice or paws. Trees usually cannot, barring a storm. But there are times when we should all use our connection with trees. Spring is such a time.

Our spiritual roots intertwine with the roots of trees. Occasionally this is quite dramatic. Siddhartha found enlightenment under an ancient fig tree and became the Buddha. Jesus spent the most difficult and agonizing hour of his life surrounded by old olive trees.

Annually, Jewish communities celebrate *Tu B'Shevat*, a new year for trees. Perhaps this is why Israel is the only country on our planet with more trees at the end of a year than at the beginning.

Our challenges in life do not always correspond to the seasons of the year. Sometimes they do. Like trees we have times of bareness when we are hit by storms, what Emily Dickinson called an "Hour of Lead." At these times we can lose hope. The trees go through this cycle every year. There is wisdom and strength to be found in slowly walking among them at any season. But in the spring we can become aware of a symphony of hope. On bare branches tiny new life begins. Soon there is a bud. Then come beautiful flowers and smells. Here at Starcross it sometimes snows apple blossoms before the business of producing fruit begins.

In the *Midrash* it is written, "Be careful not to destroy My world; for if you destroy it, there is no one who will fix it after you." This primal wisdom is sometimes found in the hearts of young activists who have never set foot in a church or synagogue but who fight to protect trees. And, these words from the *Midrash* also apply to our

human lives. I love Psalm 92 which reveals our common roots;

*The just will flourish like the palm tree and grow like a
Lebanon cedar.*

*Planted in the house of the Lord
they [us] will flourish in the courts of our God,
still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap, still
green...*

To help this be so, let us often walk among the trees.

Brother Toby