



It is important not to over-indulge in somber Lenten rituals. True to her blunt-speaking Jewish heritage, St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) put it well in a prayer, *“From sad faced saints, O Lord deliver us!”* Jesus would have recently participated in the joyful Jewish spring festival of Purim and heard read out from the Book of Esther, *“For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honor.”*

At my home we let the apple trees guide us to an awareness of the “light and gladness” that is around us. Those trees are also symbols of reinvigoration. Sitting under the sweet smelling branches of an ancient tree recently, I jotted down some of what I saw and heard — shadows of honey bees on my paper, apple blossoms drifting on my shoulders, finches singing, a dog running Carmen-like with an apple branch in her mouth, a cat wide-eyed on a branch, a blanket of tiny purple flowers leading from the tree to the chapel.

I find it takes courage to respond to the apple tree’s invitation to join the spiritual dance celebrating new growth. I don’t do it well. But I try. And, as with any prayer or meditation, the doing and the trying are pretty much the same thing. Wherever you are, and whatever around

you brings a fresh start to mind — will you join in the dance?

From Brother Toby's STEPPING STONES: Daily Reflections by an Unconventional Monk.

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