

Seasons

Meditation 23rd February 2021

At last, after weeks of rain, snow, ice and freezing temperatures we have been blessed with two beautiful afternoons when the sun has shone, there is little wind and we can notice the signs of new life in the garden. Aconites and snowdrops here in our front garden in Slaley are prolific, as are crocus that have sprung up through the lawns, none, I have to say, are due to our endeavours but to the lady who lived in this house before us for many years. Lilac trees are budding and all around us there are signs that this dark, difficult winter may be drawing to a close, we can hope that this is the case.

I have been helping a friend with his sheep over the past few weeks. He only has four ewes that have now produced two lambs each. Such signs of new life have been a great joy to Steve, who has never been involved with sheep before and to myself. I cannot pretend that trudging through snow, across fields and a wood to reach the place where they are living at the moment was easy, especially coming home, which was uphill most of the way, but to see these animals, the lambs snuggled together under the heat lamps, was worth it.

The next part of the sheep operation is new to us both - trying to milk the sheep with a milking machine. We did try hand milking a couple of days ago, the sheep walked into the crush and stood quite happily whilst I fed them, but the amount of milk extracted was only enough for two cups of tea. It was a start. Eventually Steve would like to make cheese with this milk and has already had some success with the cheese that he has made albeit with milk from different sheep.

So for me, being involved in a task that I enjoy doing, over the last two or three weeks, has helped to lift my spirits, for I have been quite down, like so many other people. New life has given me hope that life will go on, soon we may be able to see our families and friends, resume some of the things we used to be very involved with whilst at the same time remembering all that we have learned through the past year - basically we don't have to fill every minute of the day with yet another activity. Now is the time when we can take stock of our lives, reflect on how we can change things. We can gaze out of the window at what the garden is producing, it is bursting with new life, even if it is too early in the year for many plants to reveal themselves. We can open ourselves up to God and to what it is He has in store for us.

Recently a friend came along to help us to prune our enormous apple tree that was getting too big for the garden. It is a beautiful old tree with many trunks, ideal to climb. Now it has a strange look about it that I am not familiar with. I hardly recognise it as being the tree to which I have become accustomed. A huge pile of branches now lie in the garden waiting to be chipped and put onto the earth to complete the cycle.

I do know that in a short while new growth will come forth from the remaining branches, we can see evidence of this already and hopefully blossom and leaves will cover the skeleton that remains, eventually we will have forgotten what it looked like before it's haircut.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Creator God, we thank you for the air that we breathe and for the ever changing skies. We give thanks for the rhythm of the seasons, for the warmth of the summer sun and the sharpness of the winter frost. Help us to feel the freshness of the breeze upon our faces and to discern the rainbow of hope that you give us. Amen.