

Welcome to Lent. Welcome to the season which is a journey with Jesus Christ. We gaze toward the final Three Days of Holy Week. Those days contain Jesus' last moments and supper with his followers, his betrayal, trial, torture, crucifixion, and death. The silence, uncertainty, sorrow, and despair of the tomb follows. Then comes the first day of the week, the joyous mystery of resurrection which catapults the disciples into fullness and richness of life. Jesus' faithful life becomes their faithful life.

Ash Wednesday is now behind us, a day which recalls the second, warm Genesis creation account in which a man is formed from the dust of the ground and the breath of God brings him to life. The Hebrew name for this man is Adam. Literally, "earth man" (adamah-earth). Like most ancient Hebrew, the name is pretty simple. Further along in the Hebrew Bible, Ezekiel prophesies over dry bones on the verge of turning back to dust in a valley. The wind of the Spirit blows over them, bringing them back to life. In both stories, the breath of God animates dust into life. The opposite is true for the end of life—at the withdrawal of the breath of God, life departs. Dust remains. In other words, for the duration of our lives we are beloved, animated dust. Very humbling. Very truthful.

From God we come, to God we return. This root of our faith is simple. We needn't fear being left behind or lost in the shuffle as much as it often feels that way. Our dust-forming, life-breathing God never abandons. Whether the journey of life is sadly brief with premature death, or long spanning a century, life is a treasure which is received back tenderly. Yes, *we* grieve our losses. *We* are separated from loved ones who have been received back into God's care, but God is never separated. Life is never lost. This is a profound mystery because our senses proclaim painfully otherwise. But this mystery is held in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Here is the mystery of our salvation.

May we be rooted in the unconditional mercy of God. A prayerful Lent to you all.
--Pastor Roy