

Blessed be God who animates our lives and calls us to a holy lent and to practices, including remembering, which return us to our true selves in God. amen

Remember you are dust and to dust you return.  
With these words Lent begins, an ashen cross becomes the outward and visible sign of our essential and quintessential identity. When we remember and return to God with open hearts we reengage our baptismal covenant, we reengage our identity of faithful people who hope for the realization of that blessed assurance.

There is incredible power in dust and what God does with dust, earth, particles, ashes...as this story demonstrates...

She had searched the world for years trying to find God, the holy, the sacred. she had gone on pilgrimages and retreats. she had engaged in contemplative prayer and other mindfulness techniques. She had held silence and witnessed speaking in tongues.

While all experiences were intriguing and even enriching, few felt authentic or genuine.

So breathing sighs too deep for words, she went home to the farm where she had been raised, the farm she had been sure she was meant to escape for its mundaneness, its ordinariness, its blandness.

Her sense and expectation of the divine was of extraordinariness and brilliance and glory

One day she came to rest in the granary, a part of the farm which still interested her. It was a chapel like building of rough hewn boards and a steep roof. The dried wheat smelled like incense and the pile appeared as gold.

She rhythmically picked up handfuls of grain and let them sift thru her hands

Dust motes danced in the sunlight filtered through the cracks of the structure

Rising toward heaven

And for a moment she realized that God was in this place, this ordinary, yet numinous luminous place

Her search had ended where she began and now she practiced contemplation differently and daily

Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return

For me this story is one of remembering the power of dust, the dust from whence we came. The power of God and what he has done with dust!

I think the dust part is fairly obvious, returning to the dust and dirt and grain of a farm became extraordinary in its ordinariness because of a more mature and formed attention and awareness, possibly kindled and shaped by years of journeying in search of the holy.

But tonight I want to focus on the remembering part

Memory is itself sacramental, it can be the image and thus perceivable almost visible sign of invisible grace, the grace of God

David Whyte poetically speaks of memory thusly:

MEMORY

is not just a then, recalled in a now, the past is never just the past, memory is a pulse passing through all created life, a wave form, a then continually becoming other thens, all the while creating a continual but almost untouchable now. But the guru's urge to live only in the now misunderstands the multilayered inheritance of existence, where all epochs live and breathe in parallels. Whether it be the epochal moment initiated by the appearance of the first hydrogen atoms in the universe or a first glimpse of adulthood perceived in adolescence, memory passes through an individual human life like a building musical waveform, constantly maturing, increasingly virtuosic, often volatile, sometimes overpowering.

Every human life holds the power of this immense inherited pulse, holds and then supercharges it, according to the way we inhabit our identities in the untouchable now. Memory is an invitation to the source of our life, to a fuller participation in the now, to a future about to happen, but ultimately to a frontier identity that holds them all at once. Memory makes the now fully inhabitable.

memory is an invitation to the source of our life  
the source of our life is God and dust  
tonight is about the invitation to a holy Lent which is also an invitation to  
visit, inhabit and appreciate the divine source and life force in our lives

In a few moments after the imposition of ashes, after the outward and visible sign of a cross of ashes is formed on your forehead to mark the invisible grace of our creation and God's love for us through eternity, we will celebrate another sacrament, the Eucharist.

It too calls for remembrance. One of the main parts of a Eucharistic Prayer is that called the anamnesis, Greek for remember. In it we remember in various ways salvation history culminating in the life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This act of remembering carries a divine power to transcend time and space.

We reverently look back in order to recall God's saving grace in our lives today and in turn to go into the world transformed again as though for the first time to reflect that salvific love in the world and to prepare ourselves for a time when all memories, all dust, all creation are gathered up into the Beloved Community.

And then after consecration we are reminded again...These are the gifts of God for the people of God take them in remembrance that Christ died for you and feed on them in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The act of Remembering RE MEMBERS US  
it changes our particles and rearranges our dust motes

I often use another phrase for the institution: Behold Who you Are Become  
What you receive.

Ash Wednesday Sermon: Remember Who and Whose You Are

March 6, 2019

The Rev. Dr. Martha Tucker

When we remember and return and give thanks we Become our truest selves...we take our place in the Body of Christ as re members.

and so tonight we participate in a sacrament of humility, the imposition of ashes, and thanksgiving, the meaning of Eucharisteo. Humility and Thanksgiving conspire to create Hope.

I invite you to remember. Remember that you are dust. Remember that you are loved. Remember that you matter...that matter matters! Remember that you are becoming your truest self in the God in whom we live and move and breathe. Remember to give thanks for the gift of our lives.

May this sacramental act of memory encourage and enliven you to live a 40 days in the wilderness like never before and emerge rejoicing in the power of Easter recovering the Alleluia because the Risen Christ has, does and will come into our lives and bring the peace which passes understanding. It really is as simple as a tiny grain.