

Good Enough. This is the title of a book of devotions I've started working my way through, and a phrase that has come in handy in many situations throughout life. The devotions are written, as the cover says, "for a life of imperfection", and that reminder, that what is good enough is an antidote to perfection, is so very needed, now and always. Reminding ourselves that our lives and life itself is good, even with its imperfections, is a most holy part of our faith in the God of love and hope. In the journey of Lent, we spend time dwelling not only in the difficulties or perceived shortcomings of our faith, fasting or adopting new practices, but ultimately dwelling in the presence of God, who is with us in those imperfect times just as much as God is with us in the good times too. We humbly come before our magnificent, holy, creator God tonight and through this season to strengthen our faith and indeed strengthen our confidence in that God who loves us deeply, just as we are, with all our imperfections and humbleness and beauty and wonder.

Ash Wednesday provides a bold and holy reminder of this beloved humility.

Having this opportunity to remember our humbleness is a gift. So often we have to hustle for a sense of worthiness, attention, feelings of power, meeting or exceeding lofty expectations. We have to puff ourselves up in order to be seen and stand out amidst all the beauty, strength, and competition so fiercely prominent in our culture.

And yet here we come, in front of our Savior, remembering Christ, who himself was humbled in his torment in the wilderness, was humbled even to the point of public crucifixion and death. In his humility we are boldly reminded of our own humility. Even Christ, the Son of God, was made humble by the workings of the world. And we don't need to show off or be anything other than our most genuine and humble selves.

The dust of which we are created is the same dust that makes up every human being, from Christ himself to the neighbor next to us. Truly we are dust, brought to life only by the power of the Holy Spirit, the breath of life, the breath of God.

Throughout this Lenten season we will join our breath of life together by the power of the Holy Spirit to sing through the Holden Evening Prayer. This liturgy is all about God lifting up the lowly and humble of heart. The entire Magnificat song is Mary recognizing her humbleness and praising God for the holy trust placed with her. She is a humble human yet exalted in that humility for having a strong enough faith to do and trust in God's will.

This is how God works - we don't need to impress or find worthiness or grace or mercy or any of these incredible gifts of God through our own works or deeds. No. We have these gifts because we are human, because we are humble servants of our loving Creator who delights in our humbleness and faithfulness. Truly everything we have and are is because of God's love and God's will for us. We are here only by the power of the Holy Spirit, who moves and breathes in our humble bodies that feel pain, get sick, get broken, and eventually pass away. Each of us is but one body, one spirit, in one time and one place, part of the whole body of Christ much greater than ourselves. The Holy Spirit which connects us to this body, the whole communion of saints is God working in and beyond our humble human capabilities. It is a gift to praise our humbleness and the God who empowers us to love and do good with what we can.

Let's give ourselves a little break, and allow this time of humbleness to give us some breathing space. We don't need to hustle or be flashy about our faith or discipline or anything else which brings us closer to God. This flashiness and show of faith practices and faithfulness is what is warned against in our Gospel text today. Doing something that looks faithful just for the sake of doing it or for the show of it to others is not done in earnest. God delights in our genuine practices, the ones we do for just ourselves and God, the prayers and holy dwellings that fill us with the rewards of God's peace, grace, and mercy. Ultimately it's our own humble trust and faithfulness, our own "good enough", which makes these powerful miracles of God's work known.

God works through our humble bodies and humble spirits. God is present in creation, from the highest, most glorious mountaintop to the smudge of

ash dust that we will soon wash away. Let us remember and give thanks for the gift of humility. Let our humble selves praise God with all our hearts, minds, and bodies. And let us remember the ashes of which we are all made, and the dust to which we shall return. Amen.