

First and Center

Pastor's Blog

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Ash Wednesday. The poet Jan Richardson encourages us not to think the purpose of ashes is to make us ashamed or paralyzed by guilt over what we have done and what we have left undone. Rather, she says, remember also what God can do with dust and ashes! "From dust you came," we say. People tend to concentrate on the "to dust you will return" part, but forget the beginning.



From dust, **you** came. Your body is created from the elements of the earth, and actually you are more water than dust, but you get the point. This is poetry, not biology. But the old story imagines that God blew breath into us at the very beginning, the Spirit of God to be shared down the generations, along with the genetic mud.

If that's the case, then being reminded of our humble origins is an opportunity to rejoice in the loving power which calls us to be more than we can ask or imagine! Yes, we are dust, but what dust! Dust of the stars molded into flesh and blood, spirit-blown air in our lungs and our minds and our hearts. God coursing through this dust to lift us up, if we will not cling so closely to the dust that we ignore the spirit. These beautiful and complex bodies are made in service of love.

If you need to give something up for Lent, I suggest giving up whatever holds you back from letting the Spirit have her way with you! I suggest giving up the idea that your body is limited in some way so that you cannot love and serve as well as someone else. Because that is not true. I suggest giving up all the "no" you say to God, to the gospel, to Jesus' challenges, and instead saying "yes, and..."