

Sacred Vulnerability

At the outset, the season of Lent makes our humanity clear— from *ashes to ashes*. The bottom line is that we are going to die and become dust. And just so we won't forget, we wear a smudge of ashes on our brows.

To be human is to encounter limits and to suffer. Through our suffering we have the opportunity to greet and love the sacred vulnerability that resides in the heart of matter and to forgive ourselves for being human. The dying God, all bloody, hanging on a tree, may repulse, offend, or scandalize us — or leave us unmoved and detached. Our response may mirror our inner relationship to our own human frailty. How much compassion and generosity can you bring to yourself in your situation? Not denial, resentment, or blame — just gentle acceptance of who you are in your sacred independence and trust that you have been created and loved by God and are therefore worthy of your own affection and regard.

What is pitiful is when we get the notion we ought not to be pitiful and then take an attitude of contempt toward ourselves. The fact is we are pitiful. All of us, poor and meager, sinners one and all. Can we lower ourselves enough to enter our pitiful reality, live there, and love it with Jesus?

Sometimes I do not know what prayer is beyond the long worn rag of human longing waved toward the heavens like a tattered flag. Today I think prayer has to do with putting down one foot after the other upon this earth, while being honest with ourselves and God about our limitations.

Loretta Ross-Gotta, *Letters from the Holy Ground*