

Reflection: First Sunday in Lent

Once upon a time there was an old farmer from the lovely island of Hawaii. He loved his land with a deep and beautiful intensity, so much so that when he sensed that he was about to die he had his sons bring him outside and lay him on his beloved earth. As he was about to expire he reached down by his side and clutched some earth onto his hands. He died a happy man.

He now appeared before heaven's gate. God, as an old white bearded man, came out to greet him. "Welcome," he said. "You've been a good man. Please, come into the joy of heaven." But as the man started to enter the pearly gates, God said, "Please, you must let the soil go."

"Never!" said the old farmer stepping back, "Never!" And so God departed sadly, leaving the old farmer outside the gates.

A few eons went by. God came out again, this time as a friend, an old drinking buddy. They had a few drinks, told some stories and then God said, "All right, now its time to enter heaven, friend. Let's go." And they started for the pearly gates.

And once more God requested that the old man let go of the soil and once more he refused.

More eons rolled by. God came out once more, this time as a delightful and playful granddaughter. "Oh, granddaddy," he said, "you're so wonderful and we all miss you very much. Please come inside with me."

The old man nodded and she helped him up for by this time he had grown indeed very old and arthritic. In fact, so arthritic was he that he had to prop up the right hand holding up the Hawaii soil with his left hand.

They moved toward the pearly gates and at this point his strength gave out. His gnarled fingers would no longer stay clenched in a fist with the result that the soil sifted out between them until his hand was empty.

He then entered heaven. The first thing he saw was his beloved island of Hawaii.

In Luke's gospel today, we find Jesus, freshly baptized, called, named, claimed and set apart for his very unique ministry in the world. Jesus is aware that his life has a unique purpose in

the heart and mind of the Almighty One. But that is where his certainty ends - as it does for many of us.

Jesus desert sojourn is a profound act of self love for he is valuing himself - and God - enough to take the time to figure out why he is unique and what it is in his human nature that can stand in the way of God's purpose for his life. Jesus is pausing to wrestle with the temptation to do things his way, instead of God's way.

On this first Sunday of Lent, what is it that God is calling us to let go of, and what is it that he is calling us too. As we journey through this Holy season of Lent, may we be open to God's loving and guiding presence in our lives.

Let us pray...

Artist of souls,

you sculpted a people for yourself

out of the wilderness in our lives.

Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and

contemplation,

that the discipline of these forty days

may sharpen our hunger for your Holy service,

and whet our thirst for the living water you offer

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.