



Don't cut the tree down. Let it alone for another year. And the manure: you can't just pour a heap of stinking fresh manure on a strawberry plant. It will be too potent. The plant will die. You have to get your hands dirty. You have to do some digging around. You have to mix the manure with the dirt. And then see what happens.

It's a strange thing to say in a sermon: there is treasure in the manure! We know that is literally true because manure has amazing nutrients and makes the best fertilizer. But I want you to give some thought to it from a spiritual perspective. What might we learn from the parts of ourselves or the parts of life that repel us, or that we avoid, or the things or people that we think stink to high heaven? Or to say it differently: how is your garden growing this Lent and what kind of manure, i.e. fertilizer, do you need so that you can produce fruit, so that you can more fully be yourself, so that you can live your baptismal vocation?

It's Lent. Lent means spring. And shoots are coming through the ground. As we sang in psalm 63, we thirst for God as in a dry land where is no water. We yearn for the kind of authentic life that money cannot buy as Isaiah reminds us.

Well, it's time to reveal the book title that captivated me this past week: *Holy Shit: Managing Manure to Save Mankind*. The author uses his experience with both farming and waste management and covers the field, so to speak, with topics like how to select the right pitchfork (now that's an image!), how to compost pet waste, and how to get ourselves over our paranoia over human waste, if you know what I mean.

And he also talks about composting. Composting breaks down food and waste and becomes fertilizer for the soil. What a great image for Lent! It was several weeks ago that we remembered that we are earth creatures, made from the soil, marked with ash on our foreheads.

If you don't already, consider composting as a spiritual practice, not only for the good of the earth but to connect you more closely to decomposition and thus to growth. After Paisley, one of our seminarians a year ago shared her passion for composting, Holy Trinity has a composting bin in our garden and composting buckets throughout our building.

Here is my hope for you this Lent. Meditate on manure and composting. It's holy shit, after all. And be glad for one more year. One more spring. One more Easter. One more year to trust God more than money. One more year to forgive yourself and others. One more year to see your weaknesses and imperfections as the manure that may hold treasure.

Lent is a time for some spiritual fertilizer. So dip your hand in the baptismal font. Eat and drink at this table. And notice the earth coming alive this spring. And you coming alive as well!