

Holy Throwing

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On the day the LORD God made earth and sky—before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the LORD God hadn't yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being to farm the fertile land...the LORD God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. (Genesis 2:4b-7 CEB)

A few years ago in the confirmation class, I tried to show to the group how very close God can be to us humans. I scooped up pretend dirt into my hands and shaped it into a pretend human form. And then I took the real face of a Questor and held it close to my own and blew into her real face, as I imagine God blew into the face of the first human. "Imagine...God was **this close** to the face of that very first human. God blew life from God's life into that human. And the human took on breath and life from God... Imagine."

It was early in the year. They were less impressed than I was by the closeness and life-breathing of God. I don't know what made me do it that day, but I never forgot the feel of that moment.

Last Saturday, I had the chance to throw a pot on a wheel. My friend and teacher talked about how throwing a pot and forming clay is a spiritual discipline, how shaping clay into an object of beauty helps her feel the presence of the holy. And then she read from Jeremiah 18, about God the potter.

I couldn't stop thinking about God in Genesis 2. I couldn't stop imagining God picking up clay, ordinary clay or even dirt and creating life at the very start.

And then I took a lump of clay myself, centered it on the wheel, turned the wheel on and began to shape and smooth and add water and try to make a form.

I'm not quitting my day job. I did not create a well-formed bowl or even a pencil holder. I ended up with a one-pound sorta bowl. But the act of forming and shaping the clay felt holy beyond words, really. God took a lump of clay and made a human. How could that happen? From cold clay came a form. Into that form God breathed breath. Life happened.

As the clay spun on the wheel, I worried less and less about the product (good thing) and entered into the process and feel of the experience and the clay if that makes sense. For a moment, I felt I had received a gift from God. For a moment, I actually felt a little of God's creative image in me.

I have days that any kind of holy feels very far away and days I feel like a broken pot, a rejected pot riddled with cracks and imperfections. This week, I'm trying to think about God centering me, shaping me, giving me a form that seemed right to God and breathing into me a divine breath and sending me on my way into this world. No promises of easy. Just a little God in there to see me through. You too.

Throwing a pot as a spiritual discipline. Shaping clay as an act of God. Indeed.

Please pray for Steve, Anna, Lara, and Jeremy Miller on the death of Steve's mother Betty and, for the friends and family of Edith Crabbe on her death at 102, Linda, Rich, Richie and Daniel on the death of Linda's father, the Rev. Robert Sandman, and pray for children and youth who struggle to hold onto the God in them.

