

Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Four simple wooden slabs assembled together with two simple words painted on them: “Amen y’all.”

On the opposite side of the room, canvas art painted with a few simple flowers and the words: “Come thy font of every blessing.”

Scattered about the room are a flock of hummingbirds — figurines in the window, a tiny piece of stained glass, wood-burning on a slab of a tree, and a pair floating beneath the words, “With God all things are possible.”

On the mantle, you’ll find a tiny turtle figurine sitting on a wicker shelf above a pair of girls wrapped in an embrace.

Atop the bookshelves, there is a collection of six uniquely-shaped and smooth stones and a little metal church replica with a wind-up thingy-do that plays “Amazing Grace.”

My desk houses a needlepoint-encased paperweight: The words “Lord make me an instrument of thy peace” at the end of a rainbow. Beneath the paperweight is a handmade card from Charlotte.

The windowsill houses a mouse puppet, named “Ally Lu,” and not far away is a little red tin cup labeled “Burrville Cider Mill,” and the box from the coffee mug I couldn’t pass by, because it read: “be BRAVE in LOVE in sadness in joy in faith.”

My list could contain so many more.

What do all of these things have in common?

These are among the trinkets, a portion of my treasure trove, that are scattered about my office. They are souvenirs I’ve collected over the years, and each one reminds me of what matters most...LOVE.

You see, behind each one of these little treasures, therein lies a story of love and relationship.

The paintings were gifts from my very first youth group. The hummingbirds are links to my husband the warrior, the matriarchs of my family, and an early conversation with the Bishop who ordained me. The turtle was a gift from my very first counseling client to thank me

because I “helped him come out of his shell.” The pair of hugging girls was a gift from a friend; she helped me to remember the bonds of friendship.

The six stones belong to my three daughters, Loyal, Levi, and I. The stones we carried during our Confirmation classes. The metal church: a gift given by a grieving daughter who lost her mother way too soon. The paperweight was a gift from my Priest at my first Cursillo. The card is a good-bye card from Charlotte: one of the first littles who spoke the Word of God to me straight from the heart — more than once, but the first was in the middle of my sermon.

Ally Lu, the mouse puppet, was the prop I used in my very first Kids Sermon.

I bought the coffee mug on my way to a difficult, high-stakes meeting, early in my days of ordained ministry. The mug was a tangible reminder that, the things I am afraid of most are not the most important. Bravery in LOVE always, always, always comes first.

Sometimes, love takes a lot of bravery. Because love — in our human hearts — is often wrapped up in fear, loneliness, anxiety, sadness, betrayal and, yet joy and faith and love, are intertwined with all of these other things. Love is, often complicated and mysterious.

The little red cup...that's a longer story. It's a story of Maddox, age 7, at his great-grandfather's interment — the great-grandfather with whom he shared a birthday. Graveside in northern NY (Maddox lives in Tennessee), we prayed Psalm 23. I often carry copies printed on card stock, for those who don't know it. As I handed them out, Maddox looked at me expectantly. I offered him a copy. At the end of the service, he asked my permission to keep it. He said it was "special." Of course, I said yes, and I thought, "I see you, young boy, lover of trinkets." A little while later, as I was walking to my car, Maddox came running up behind me. Struggling for words to catch my attention (he's not alone, many do not know how to address a female Priest), he said...something, something, "Your Highness." It was as cute as cute could be. And, before I could say, no, no, not your highness...Out of breath, he handed me this little red cup, and said, "I want you to have this." I knew it was a souvenir from his recent trip to Burrville Cider Mill. I said, "For me? You want me to keep this? Are you sure?" "Yes, I want you to have it," he said it with such certainty and conviction, that I knew there was only one answer I could give to honor his gift to me. I knew that it was an exchange of love.

Sometimes, love takes a lot of bravery.

And, we are never alone.

The gentle beauty of Lent is that we have opportunity to remember and to practice.

We remember that, in this life, we have fragile human hearts that are vulnerable to all of the things that make love complicated.

The prophet Joel reminds us that God is always ready for us to return, no matter where we are or how far we have fallen, Divine love awaits our return. We are reminded that God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and does not punish.

The Psalmist echoes: The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger, and of great kindness. The Lord knows what we are made of: we are born from dust, we shall return to dust. We are fallible, imperfect, and prone to sin.

Here is the miracle of love. No matter what, God wants to be in relationship with us. God wants us to be in relationship with one another.

As Jesus reminds in our Gospel, when we focus on giving rather than receiving, when we use prayer rightly to connect with God, when we fast in order to realign our hearts with God's will, something beautiful happens.

When we rend our hearts to God, we are able to more fully live into the belovedness we were created for. The more we remember and reflect, the more we return our hearts to God, the more renewed we become. The more embodied in Christ we become.

And, before we realize it, the more brave in love we become.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

This Lent, my friends, I invite you to consider along with me:

What’s in your treasure trove?

Amen.