



Growing Down Sacramentally

"Normally we come into the world headfirst, like divers into the pool of humanity. . . . We grow down, and we need a long life to get on our feet. . . . To plant a foot firmly on earth--that is the ultimate achievement, and a far later stage of growth than anything begun in your head." (p. 42)

" . . . I am turning that tree upside down. My model of growth has its roots in heaven and imagines a gradual descent downward toward human affairs." (p. 43)

"Creating progresses downward from the transcendent to the teeming here of immanence." (p. 44)

[James Hillman, *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling* (New York: Warner, 1996)]

At the Holy Table at St. Patrick's, West Monroe, on a particular Sunday, these words and images danced before me. A new perception of the experience of sacramental ministry--growing down into God's immanence in the Eucharist, touching that immanence as a priest, being one through whose service Christ becomes immanent in bread and wine for the nurture of the people.

It's as if finally I have found my "lot" (p. 45-46), my soul's portion in the world order. As Hillman says, "a pattern that has been selected by your soul before you ever got here--or, better, said, that is always and continually being selected by your soul, because time does not enter the equations of myth." Jeremiah the prophet said it well. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you . . ." (Jeremiah 1:5)

So often, standing at that Table, a spiritual energy envelops me, a tangible, physical sensation of God's love flowing in and through me as the prayers of the assembly are gathered up and expressed to God in the Great Thanksgiving. The aroma of the wine, the rough texture of the bread, the agonizing descent of Christ into our aloneness and alienation, the taste of his blood, the crackling sound of his breaking body, the smell of his sweat on a sweltering day, crumbs on the corporal--symphonic blending of images and emotions and sensations.

Growing down into God in the Eucharist. My soul has found its lot, both as one who grows down into Eucharist when presiding and when sitting on the pew as a worshipper.

God's peace,

David W. Perkins+
Interim Rector