

This meditation is from Nathan D. Mitchell, from the booklet, *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter* (by Liguori Publications).

*A Reflection on the Second Week of Lent*

## Awe Begins in the Body

Theologians today often observe that we come to God only in and through our bodies. That is one reason, surely, why Christian liturgy and sacraments rely not merely on words but on *deeds*—physical acts, bodily gestures. We don't baptize brains; we baptize *bodies*; we draw them dripping wet from pools of water, slather them with fragrant oil, dress them in shining robes, and feed them at the Lord's table. In the sacraments, we become fully present—to ourselves and others—in and as our bodies. No wonder the early Christian writer Tertullian called flesh the “hinge of salvation.” For in the Church's eucharistic liturgy, we become the very thing we celebrate: Christ's body, member for member, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone. Thus, in spite of centuries of Christian “suspicion” about the body—its passions, fluids, and processes—we know today that our flesh maps our access to God.

There are, then, both divine and human reasons why our body—especially our sense of touch—builds our connections to God and to one another. Pediatricians point out that touching is so crucial to an infant's development that even if a baby is otherwise fed and cared for, it may die if deprived of physical contact. Some hospitals, in fact, now have programs where preemies are held and massaged for fifteen minutes two or three times a day. These babies gain weight almost fifty percent faster than preemies left alone. Their nervous systems develop more rapidly as well. If holiness is truly wholeness, we can see why awe—our sense of God's grandeur and graciousness—truly begins in our bodies.

*The body is our path to union with God.*