

"Alleluia," the first prayer of a child.

The earliest words are always the most important, and so it begins with the joyful “Ababababababa” for hours on end while rolling across the living room floor. In the exercising of the tongue, the most intimate name for God that we have known in human history, the one which we waited centuries for—the one that flowed off of Jesus’ tongue—naturally rolls off the lips of the five month old.

Alleluia, the primordial expression of praise. The first prayer of all of us.

Each Lent the word is buried like a seed. Not as a punishment—though it may feel like that on Ash Wednesday—but so that in abstinence, our heart may remember our fondness, our natural inclination for the word that springs from our innermost being and rolls from our lips. We bury it like a seed so that it might grow. So that the spirit of praise will take root again in our lives and blossom with the Spring.

- Ann Garrido, adapted from a reflection first written in 1999

