



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

**September 12, 2010**

**Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Lehoma Goode**

RCL: Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28; Psalm 14; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-10

LM: Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14; Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-32 or 15:1-10

The hard words of the passage from Jeremiah raise the question: Is it ever too late to repent and change? The devastation in these images reflects what will happen if that “too late” time comes, as it did for Jeremiah’s Jerusalem. God promises not to make a full end of the people, but their suffering is hauntingly real. Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano turns to the book of Jeremiah for comfort as she compares the suffering she sees in the Philippines to the effects of a destructive typhoon<sup>1</sup>. The injustices and increasing militarization of the global economy cause real damage to people and the environment. Therefore our work for justice and peace is urgent. She finds a bright flower that has survived the storm, a sign that, after devastation, God brings healing to suffering people. Christians are called to act now to alleviate suffering and to hope that God’s restoration is truly fulfilled.

Humanity has always asked why there is evil in the world. Today’s readings show that at least some of the evil is connected to ignorance and arrogance. Psalm 14 points out that those who believe that there is no God to whom they will be accountable are foolish. They feel free to do evil and to treat others unjustly. The psalmist insists that God is aware of human actions and is a refuge for poor people.

In 1 Timothy, Paul thanks God for showing mercy when Paul acts wrongly from ignorance and unbelief. After realizing his errors, Paul rejoices that by grace he is called to be an apostle, despite his previous actions. He becomes an example of Christ’s patience and God’s grace and forgiveness for God’s imperfect servants. In the passage from the book of Exodus in the Roman Catholic Lectionary, God loses patience with the Israelites in the desert for their unfaithfulness and arrogance, for they are “a stiff-necked people.” Perhaps they know better, but they sin anyway. Yet, after listening to Moses’ advocacy, God relents from the intended punishment.

Psalm 51 (Roman Catholic Lectionary) is the prayer all of us might recite after doing evil, as we plead for cleansing and renewal. The cleansing results in praise to God and the sacrifice of a broken, humbled heart. When faithful people learn about the world’s suffering and its causes, it is easy to feel a paralyzing guilt. But this is not a good motivation for sustained action for justice. If Christians, though brokenhearted and

1. Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano, “Keeping Faith,” *The Other Side* (May-June 2002) 9.



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humbled, can accept God's cleansing forgiveness, we will have more power for significant action.

Luke's parables underline the truth present in the other passages: Although God holds people accountable for their actions, God does not desire to punish them; rather, God seeks out those who have gone astray, and when they repent, rejoices. The Roman Catholic Lectionary, extending the gospel passage to include the parable of the Prodigal Son, offers still more reassurance for those who want a new start. The story reminds repentant ones that God rushes to meet them, and reassures arrogant folks that they, too, are invited to the feast. Sometimes advocates give up on people they are trying to influence, thinking they will never change their minds. Imitating God's patience and grace, may we never give up on anybody—ourselves, those we perceive as unjust sinners, and even those who are scandalized by our work, as the Pharisees were shocked at Jesus' behavior.

#### *Children's Time*

Tell a child-sized version of the story of the Prodigal Son. Ask the children how each character felt. Why did the family want to celebrate? How do they feel when they are forgiven or someone else is forgiven for doing something wrong?

#### *Musical Suggestions:*

The King of Love My Shepherd Is—Gather Comprehensive 635

Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace—Gather Comprehensive 634, Banquet of Praise 178

Do Not Fear to Hope—Gather Comprehensive 596

Help Us Accept Each Other—Banquet of Praise 186

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1. Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano, "Keeping Faith," *The Other Side* (May-June 2002) 9.