## As many of you know, before I enrolled into seminary, I worked as a civil engineer for a number of years. I often had to go out to the field to do some on-site inspection on various bridge and roadway projects. As a consultant, we monitored the progress of the construction as well as conducted biennial inspection on the integrity and the strength of the structure. If there were any deficiencies, we would make a note and report it to the city or the State in order to ensure that everything would be safe for the public’s use. This is the only way in which we can find out if something is not right, just like we go to our doctors for our annual checkups. It may seem like a never-ending project and a constant “work in progress” but it HAS to be done.

## Similarly, our life can also be viewed as a constantly “Work in Progress” that requires close monitoring and periodic inspection. God, as the chief architect and builder, created us and has charged us on a journey with a purpose in life. Like a structure that withstands its wear and tear over time, we souls have also been tested…for better or for worse through our trials and challenges.

## When God breathed life into the creations of this earth, God did not stop creating after the first 6 days. God continues to renew us and sustain us. As Andrew read for us earlier from the prophet Jeremiah, we are like the clay in the hand of the potter. We are at the complete mercy and imagination of our creator God. The potter constantly molds and shapes us into the forms and conditions in which we are being called. Ultimately we acknowledge that God is in control and claim that God retains His sovereignty over us. If God so chooses, God can decide to break it down, tear things apart, and start things all over again from scratch. God is God and we are not.

## God chose the young prophet Jeremiah to deliver this hard message of repentance and change to His people. Imagine what kind of response Jeremiah might receive while the Israelites’ hearts remained stubborn and hardened like stone, reluctant to be softened and remolded by the potter.

## Not many of us like to be told that we must change. We like to be the one making all the decisions calling the shots but unfortunately we don’t always make the best decisions. We’ve disappointed God and fallen short of God’s expectation.

## As we’ve seen throughout the Old Testament, as painful as it may be, God will not be hesitant to destroy and re-build if necessary. When the people sinned, God is disappointed. God sent judgement not to punish them but because He loved them. God offered them an opportunity to repent and to be redeemed. God certainly was not flip-flopping of where He stands. God remains firm when it comes to our demanded obedience the consequences we may face if the covenant were violated.

## As the book of Ecclesiastes reminded us that, for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up.[[1]](#footnote-1)

## It breaks God’s heart, whenever we turn our faces against God or when we indulge our lives with frivolous worship of false idols of anything BUT God. We’ve consumed our time with ungodly thoughts or engaged in quarreling gossips. We’ve squandered our opportunities and resources over trivial matters while disrupting the unity of the body, rather than promoting peace and harmony in sharing God’s mission with others. In spite of all of these, God as the Potter continues to reach out to us. He fine-tunes us, tweaks us, and remolds us as clay by giving us a second chance.

I remember when I was in JHS, I took a ceramic shop class once. I learned how to make these ceramic plates, cups and vases from scratch. It’s kind of like baking. We had to prepare the clay with the proper ingredients, otherwise it will not come out the way it’s supposed to, either it will be too soft or too hard.

Little did I know that the lessons I learned from the Junior High ceramic class proved to be valuable lessons in life…. that we must be patient in following instructions and with the right amount of ingredients, or else it simply will not work. And if it fails to come out right, don’t be afraid to try again until we get it right the next time. That was the biggest takeaway from my ceramic class.

## I’m sure it is like that in other forms of disciplines such as learning how to play an instrument, play a sport, or even drive a car. It takes time to perfect one’s skills. Like those Olympic athletes who spent years of training for the competition, not all of them will win a medal but their efforts were not wasted for sure. They might have taken hundreds of falls with various setbacks, but each time, they must pick themselves back up and finish what they have started. The question is, are we willing? Are we willing to let God remold us, reshape us, and transform us like the clay in the potter’s hand?

## Confession is not just a ritual of “going through the motion”, but an intentional time of self-seeking and re-connecting with God, as we lay aside any distractions that we may have in life by refocusing and rededicating our lives and priorities back on God. As we read in our Prayer of Confession earlier taken from Psalm 139, the Psalmist declared that God has searched us and known us, both inside and out. God knows our every thought when we are sitting down and when we are rising up. God knows our very words and what’s on our mind, whether they’re intended for good or for evil. God has intricately knitted us together in our mothers’ wombs, just like the Potter who must spend time with His clay in order to make the “perfect” vessel. What a beautiful imagery that is in describing our relationship with God that the Psalmist described. Later on we will once again come before this table of thanksgiving that is set before us in remembrance of God’s redeeming grace. God remains steadfast in His love despite our betrayal and neglect. God continues to seek our repentance against all evil and injustice. God demands nothing less than our faithfulness in Him who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Working with clay can be messy, well, so is carrying out God’s work in ministry as we have been charged to. It requires much patience, diligence, commitment, and perseverance. Just as we are clay to the potter, we too must not give up upon one another so easily if the other clay is becoming too dry or not coming out to the way we would hope. We must be willing to invest our time and imagination in order to make things work. As Jesus reminded us that *those who endure till the end shall be saved.*[[2]](#footnote-2) Persistence and commitment will pay off over time. Our lives is a constantly “work in progress”.

**By the grace of God, we have been redeemed by what Christ has done on the cross.** Transformation continues to take place even if we may not see it before our eyes or hear it with our ears. But know that God’s seeds have been sown upon the preaching and the hearing of God’s word. As God continues to transform us, mold us, and shape us into what we are called to be, may we radiate God’s handiwork in us and reflect upon God’s glory to those around us. Or as the newest canonized saint Mother Teresa once said, ***“Spread the love of God through your life, but only use word when necessary.”*  *“I am [only] a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world.”***

**Let us be the best clay as we can be! And let God the potter who shapes us and molds us into the best pottery that reflects God’s greatest glory.**

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Ecclesiastes 3:1-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew 24:13* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)