

# TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #132

READING I Exodus 32:7–11, 13–14

### A reading from the Book of Exodus

The LORD said to Moses,  
 “Go down at **once** to your **people**,  
 whom you brought **out** of the land of **Egypt**,  
 for they have become **depraved**.  
 They have soon turned **aside** from the way I pointed **out**  
 to them,  
 making for themselves a **molten calf** and **worshiping** it,  
**sacrificing** to it and crying out,  
 ‘**This** is your God, O **Israel**,  
 who brought you **out** of the land of **Egypt**!’  
 I see how **stiff-necked** this people is,” continued the Lord  
 to Moses.  
 “Let me **alone**, then,  
 that my **wrath** may blaze up **against** them to **consume** them.  
**Then** I will make of you a **great nation**.”  
 But Moses **implored** the LORD, his God, saying,  
 “**Why**, O LORD, should your **wrath** blaze up  
 against your **own people**,  
 whom **you** brought out of the land of **Egypt**  
 with such **great power** and with so **strong a hand**?  
 Remember your **servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel**,  
 and how you **swore** to them by your **own self**, saying, >>

Note that God and Moses will take turns, like exasperated parents, labeling the Israelites “*your people*.”  
 Stress that it is the Lord who speaks.

Don’t hold back expressing God’s anger and frustration.

God’s disappointment is over their repeated infidelity and for mistaking a human object for the eternal God.

Rather than rage, these words can sound like an angry person hoping to be “held back” from taking retribution.

Moses’ voice should be a blend of humility and confidence in God’s merciful love.

Recall the patriarchs with tenderness and repeat God’s promise with the assurance with which God first pronounced it.

**READING I** The episode of the Israelites making a molten calf that they worship in the desert is the context for one of the most engaging dialogues in the Bible. It begins with the Lord telling Moses, “Go down to your people whom you brought out of Egypt.” Yet earlier, when speaking to Moses at Mount Horeb, the Lord had looked with compassion on the enslaved Israelites, repeatedly referring to them as “my” people: “I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:10). But now, because of Israel’s idolatry, the Lord no longer iden-

tifies them as “my people”; they now belong to Moses. The Lord’s plan is for the divine wrath to blaze up against Israel to consume them. Then the Lord will make of Moses a great nation, seeming to reverse God’s ancient promise to Abraham, now transferred to Moses.

After such a rejection of the people by the Lord, it is Moses’ turn to speak. At Mount Horeb, in their first meeting, Moses had not hesitated to argue, trying to make the Lord choose someone else to lead the people. Now he shows the same determination and boldness in speaking to God,

asking why the Lord should show wrath against “your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt.” Moses is saying that the people still belong to the Lord. They are your people, not mine! Moses also reminds the Lord of the promise to Abraham, that he would have numerous descendants. Moses is arguing that the original promise to Abraham should not now be given to Moses, but that the Lord should remain faithful to the divine word.

Moses’ plea to the Lord is both audacious and unselfish. The Lord listened to such an impassioned speech and turned

Take a substantial pause before announcing God's change of heart.

For meditation and context:

**'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; and all this land that I promised, I will give your descendants as their perpetual heritage.'"**  
**So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19 (Luke 15:18)

**R. I will rise and go to my father.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me.

READING II 1 Timothy 1:12-17

**A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy**

**Beloved:**

**I am grateful to him who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me trustworthy in appointing me to the ministry.**

**I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and arrogant, but I have been mercifully treated because I acted out of ignorance in my unbelief.**

**Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been abundant, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**

**This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance:**

**Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these I am the foremost.**

Beloved = bee-LUHV-uhd

Be aware of where you are headed; Paul is not expressing generic gratitude but thanks for God's inexplicable mercy!

He's not bragging, but confessing his earlier ignorance and arrogance.

Don't speak of his "ignorance" as an excuse; Paul is nothing but grateful here.

This is a grand and solemn truth best spoken with heartfelt simplicity.

away from the threatened punishment. In spite of Israel's infidelity, the people remain the Lord's own.

**READING II** Near the middle of the reading from 1 Timothy, Paul writes, "the grace of our Lord has been abundant." Both before and after this statement of faith, Paul gives evidence from his own life of the abundance of grace, bestowed freely and generously. As a Jew well versed in his tradition, Paul would know that the Lord God of Israel is the one who bestows grace. Like the God

of Israel, Christ Jesus did not deal with Paul as his own sins merited.

Having formerly been a blasphemer, persecutor, and arrogant man who acted in ignorance, Paul experienced the greatest of graces in being treated mercifully by Christ. Paul saw his indebtedness due to sin vast indeed. But now Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners, uses Paul to display divine patience and mercy. Paul's life, transformed by grace, is to be an example of the mercy that God offers to all sinners. The foremost of sinners becomes the foremost example of the

mercy of Christ Jesus. Having begun his narration in gratitude, Paul concludes with a prayer of praise.

**GOSPEL** "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Complaining with what they considered a harsh insult, the Pharisees and scribes make a profoundly ironic statement, unrecognized by themselves, but surely comprehended by anyone who hears the Gospel. Jesus' welcoming sinners and eating with them is a joyful proclamation of the good news, but the Pharisees regard such

Connect his thoughts: (a) I was chosen (b) because as a great sinner (c) I'm an example of God's mercy!

Paul ends with a moment of deep prayer. Don't list God's attributes like grocery items. Each reveals a profound dimension of the mystery of God.

The makeup of the crowd attracted to Jesus disturbs the Pharisees, who find reason to grumble.

They don't bother whispering; they want him to hear their displeasure.

Imagine Jesus moving among the crowd, catching one person's eye and then another. These stories should be animated and upbeat.

The tone throughout says, "This is obvious; everyone (even you!) would behave this way!"

Here Jesus speaks for God and the ways of God's Kingdom—sure to anger his critics.

Note Luke's use of a female image to present God's love for sinners.

As above, emphasize the *public* rejoicing.

actions as shockingly scandalous. The Pharisees and scribes are so dismissive of Jesus that they do not even refer to him by name. Although they talk about "this man," rather than to him, Jesus addresses them directly.

Jesus begins with a parable asking "What man among you?" The Pharisees are to imagine themselves as participants in the parable. The first two parables that Jesus tells them are notably brief, and follow the same structure. One lost sheep and one lost coin motivate a shepherd and a woman to search out what is lost. For one

**But for that reason I was mercifully treated, so that in me, as the foremost, Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for those who would come to believe in him for everlasting life. To the king of ages, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.**

GOSPEL Luke 15:1-32

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke**

**[Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus,**

**but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."**

**So to them he addressed this parable.**

**"What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them**

**would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it?**

**And when he does find it,**

**he sets it on his shoulders with great joy**

**and, upon his arrival home,**

**he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.'**

**I tell you, in just the same way**

**there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people**

**who have no need of repentance.**

**"Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it?**

**And when she does find it,**

**she calls together her friends and neighbors**

**and says to them,**

**'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.' >>**

sheep and one coin, seemingly so insignificant, the searchers are surprisingly diligent. The shepherd leaves the other ninety-nine sheep in the desert, going on the quest over a vast area, needing to look behind, around, and under the various hiding places in the desert environment. The woman, though conducting her search over a much smaller area, is similarly thorough; she lights a lamp, sweeps, and searches carefully. Through their determination, the two searchers find what is lost and rejoice in the finding. Their joy must be shared, so they invite friends and neighbors to cele-

brate the finding of what was lost. The pattern of the two parables is thus loss, searching, finding, rejoicing, and sharing of the joy. Finally, each episode is compared to the joy over one repentant sinner. The saying about a repentant sinner indicates that both the shepherd and the woman are images for the God who rejoices at the finding of each sinner restored to sheepfold and household.

The third parable is much longer, with well-drawn characters: the father, the elder son, and the younger son. Like the sheep and the coin, the younger son becomes