



**Meditation for Wednesday in the Second Week of Lent
March 3, 2021**

*Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand,
says the LORD . . . [Jeremiah 18:6]*

The image of God as a potter is a powerfully *physical* image of God as creator. The potter wrestles with the clay on the turning wheel, holding it both firmly and gently as it twists this way and that, bulging in one direction, squishing in another. The potter creates through holding and pushing and pulling. Like any artist, the potter cannot control the precise outcome of this process, cannot tell at the beginning what the product will look like. No one, not even the potter, can see the beautiful pot in the lump of clay. The potter can, however, abandon the project at any time, discard the clay, and begin anew.

The image of God as potter appears several times in Hebrew Scripture, usually to represent God's power and authority. The "clay" that God forms into a vessel is Israel; it may become "spoiled in the potter's hand" because in the ongoing process of creation the clay may turn out to be of an inferior quality, or pebbles or other impurities may become embedded in it. Jeremiah warns the people of Israel not to mistake themselves for the beautiful vessels they will become: creation is not complete, but they have been preening themselves as if they were already complete. Or, perhaps frustrated with the slowness of their own formation they have turned to the gods worshipped by other cults. I am not finished, says God—to them and to us. Do not become arrogant, and do not despair.

But this image of God reveals more than God's power: It is the image of a God who works carefully and deliberately with the *material* of the world. It is the image of a God who calls tricksters and stutterers like Jacob and Moses to lead their people—who works our imperfections into the creation of a beautiful and useful vessel. It is the image of a God who holds creation firmly and gently. It is the image of a God who wrestles with us. It is the image of a God who, most importantly, has not predetermined the ultimate form of what we will be.