

# More than sorrow

By [Clay Oglesbee](#)

September 19, 2011

*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Oglesbee's current *Living by the Word* column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

As pastors, we spend a great deal of time sharing in the ongoing lives and adventures of our congregants and community members. We are also called, literally, to come to love and suffer with them when disappointments, disasters or deaths occur.

One sister came to our inner-city church when she was in her mid-50s. She became a close friend and steady hand in the congregation. However, within two years of our mutual discovery, she abruptly learned that she had a terminal cancer. There was nothing to be done. It's not hard to remember how her grief at first overwhelmed her. She complained to me bitterly. Having come to this new community and a new life, now could this all be taken from her? "It's not fair," she said. "It is too soon."

However, the bread of sorrow was not all she received. Her spiritual friendships and the care of many people enabled her to open herself to her one last perfect storm, her only death. One day, in the midst of the struggles, she insisted that I listen to a recording I'd never heard before, by Enya. The song represented her own path and growing confidence, and it became an anthem for me, too. The song was "How Can I Keep from Singing":

My life flows on in endless song  
Above earth's lamentation.  
I hear the clear though far-off hymn  
That hails a new creation. . . .  
Since love is Lord of heaven and earth,  
How can I keep from singing?