

The background image is a painting of a pottery workshop. In the foreground, a large, rectangular wooden block, possibly a workbench or a piece of raw wood, is shown in warm, golden-yellow light. The wood has a visible grain and some knots. In the background, a large, rounded clay pot with a handle is visible, resting on a surface. The overall atmosphere is warm and focused on the craft of pottery.

The Potter's Hands

The Potter's Hands

Consider how we are Created and Called – Moulded by God

Seeing

Have you ever made something – a drawing, a painting, mowed the lawn immaculately, tended a garden, sewn a dress, cooked a delicious recipe, made a piece of furniture, designed, modelled or fired a clay pot? How proud you must have felt, to share it with others so they too could experience its unique beauty, created by your hands!

God is the Master Potter, the Creator, shaping us physically, moulding us spiritually in the image of Christ and reshaping us when we collapse to become a vessel that is useful.

When Jeremiah was in a dilemma of how to defeat the Babylonians, God nudged him to go to the potter's house to see how the clay moulds and spoils and reforms in the hands of the potter.

The clay shapes into a beautiful, useful vessel, just as we are shaped when we trust God. The potter's wheel and the water are symbolic of the daily challenges and changes that the wheel of life brings our way.

Clay begins brittle and hard and needs to be moistened with water and kneaded – our brittle parts of life can be softened by our experiences of love and gentleness.



When have you felt stiff, stubborn, “not mouldable”?

During this time, we turn to God, trusting God to soften us, create us into Christ's image to show others the beauty of God.

There is a technique in forming clay. The right hand exerts pressure; this can be seen as the daily challenges of our lives with deadlines, stress and expectations others put on us or a spanner is thrown into the works that need an immediate change. If we don't trust in God these external pressures can make our lives collapse. God holds us securely to stay in shape.

The left hand is placed inside the vessel which exerts pressure to shape the vessel. The fingers squeeze, nudge and imprint the uniqueness of each pot. God moulds us from within and influences us to become what God wants us to be. The strength of the Holy Spirit then kindles our soul just like the clay that is fired in the kiln to make the vessel strong and useful.

The events we encounter each day make and sculpt us into the image of Christ, make us persevere and be resilient to the pressures of life. We become watertight containers holding love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The beauty is that if it collapses the potter doesn't give up on the clay. God never gives up on us. We can be weak, we sin, we are human, and this is when God gently calls us to be reshaped. By reconciling with God and those we have hurt, even ourselves, the potter can create a new vessel. God creates us anew over and over again when we collapse.

Video – I Am The Potter



How have you been moulded by God's love for you?

Listening

The Potter and the Clay – Jeremiah 18:1-2

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." So, I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Play music/video: 'The Potter's Hands' (Hillsong) whilst participants respond to the following questions:



Questions to ponder:

Who are the 'potters' that God uses to shape your life?

When you have had pressures in life through suffering or hardship how did the Master Potter mould you to cope with these challenges?

Responding

As we allow our lives to be sculpted by the Master's hands we will become, well-tuned, happy, polished, and productive. We must respond to our Master's care, demanding nothing, and surrendering all. Allow the Lord to give your life purpose. Allow God to mould your mind to transform your very thinking, and allow His love to shine through you, making an impact in others' lives. The more you become as clay, and allow God to mould you, the clearer your calling in life will become. As God moulds you and uses you, your goals in life will not be to reach the places that you desire, but to find the destinations that He has waiting for you. You are the handiwork of God, the Master Sculptor, and you are a masterpiece moulded and sculpted by the Lord. Your life in Christ is a thing of beauty that even Michelangelo in all his glory could not even come close to creating. Melt in His presence and allow Him to mould and shape you into the person that God desires you to be. Our Lord wishes us to be . . . like clay.

The Potter's Hands

Strong hands hold
a shapeless lump;
clay to be pounded and kneaded
until, even textured and air-freed,
it is supple-smooth for the potter's wheel.

The swift-spinning motion;
pressuring hands that pull
and draw relentlessly into centre -
for what is not centred must be put away;
only centred clay can yield its inmost.

Clay thus opened to shaping action -
hand moving steadily

pulling
raising
widening

asking for the form that is hidden in the clay,
hand strong in supportive stillness
speaking its own unceasing demands.

To one-in-answer; to the other in
trust the clay

pulls
rises
widens

surrenders the form hiding in itself...
becoming one with the potter's will
until spent and shaped
is freed to wait for the time
to confirm into hardened shape
in dialogue with the potter.

Not as a final respite,
but only to be turned
so that what is not perfect may be revealed
and placed ruthlessly
beneath the cutting tool,
until, smooth-grooved and time-hardened
it is purified by fire into final shape;
now enabled to receive
colour and shine from another's hand -
final surrender to the potter's wish.

John Predmore SJ - Ignatius Spirituality

Let us pray together

Lord Jesus, it is your hands that take and knead and centre and open and support so that clay can yield itself in obedient answer and trusting surrender to your loving action.

You relentlessly draw us into God-centre, so that open, yielding, totally one with your loving will it is freed to wait and confirmed in shape and burnt in fire and clothed in colour- to delight the heart of its potter.

Amen.