May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.

 Please sit down.

 Reading today’s liturgy, I went for, the petra-petros wordplay, rock foundations and stones. Not the standard questions of the debate about popes and male only priesthood.

 My personal question, what is my rock foundation? Do I cast stones?

 In many languages, nouns have gender. There are many Hebrew words for rock and stone. צוּר (tsoor) is rock describing the power of Israel’s God. אֶ֫בֶן (eh'-ben) for stone. Quarried stones, cornerstones and capstones are the building blocks of Zion. Fortressed faiths become godly stones that destroy. In Joshua, God throws “huge stones” on Israel’s enemies. Stones cast to kill infidels in Deuteronomy, blasphemers in Leviticus.

 In the New Testament Greek, petra is feminine and petros is masculine. In some languages, the feminine term is often the quintessence from which an item derived. The woman in me delights in this. Petra is the bedrock the source. Petros means a stone or pebble. In John, Jesus does not condemn the adulterous woman to stoning. Is he is condemning stoning in the name of religious dogma and hypocrisy?

 What is my rock foundation?

 “Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug”. Isaiah speaks to my strength. Jesus is the mother rock my matrix. Julian writes, “He is our Mother.” her tiny hazelnut is my pebble of faith

 “Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you.” Isaiah reminds me, I am born from a womb of faith that crosses time and space. “[Julian] sees “that our substance is in God; that is to say that God is God and our substance is a creature in God. “

 We sang in the psalm, “The Lord will make good his purpose for me; O Lord, your love endures for ever; do not abandon the works of your hands.” Simon’s revelation, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” made him Jesus’ petros. “Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.”

 I am Peter a stone with which Jesus continues to build his church. In my hands, I hold my pebble of belief the size of a hazelnut. As Julian, I know this tiny faith of mine is God made. God loves it and God sustains it. It will not fall into nothingness.

 In Psalm 118, there is the “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” A midrash, a rabbinical tale explains the rejected stone. The capstone for Solomon’s temple at first is cast aside and forgotten. Years later it is sought discovered among weeds and raised in the final ceremony to complete the temple. Luke affirms in Acts, “This Jesus is ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.’”

 I do not reject the stone, but fear a fortressed faith. I want to be Mary standing unafraid at the foot of the cross and crying “Abba” reaching out to my risen Lord? The strength of her faith a rock foundation on which I gently build my church.

 Faith is corruptible. I know mountains turn into sand over time by wind and water. In the movies, chain gangs pound rocks into gravel.

 “For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you” Except Peter and I are flesh and blood. I do not want to be Peter who denies Jesus and hides in a backroom while Jesus hangs on the cross. The uncertainties of his faith are my search for God.

 I felt the presence of a Goddess when I almost died from choking at the age of nine. My search for her or God began in Catholic School. I found Mary Magdalene my comfort against my damnation. My parents dropped my sisters and me off at a different Sunday schools every year intensifying my exploration of theologies and religious practices. In High School, I had to leave a Lutheran-Missouri Synod youth group after Confirmation. I could not abide that God condemns innocent people to Hell because they did not know Jesus. I imagined un-baptized children in Africa hunted down by missionaries. These Stones cast because of my blasphemy.

 In the middle 60’s, I started college in the Texas Panhandle the hub of Southern Baptist. There were no religions that met my women’s libber sensibilities. I even looked into Judaism, Jesus’ own faith. In 1974, I was excited by the ordination of women priests. I became Episcopalian when starting a family. In graduate school in the heart of the Bible Belt, we had a woman as our University Canterbury priest. I was a proud Episcopalian. Then I moved to Bakersfield.

 I am intellectually prideful that my theological inquiries led me to the Episcopal Church. As a good Episcopalian, I do not push my beliefs on anyone. I consider all religions humankind’s imperfect attempts to worship God. I believe everyone has a right to their own beliefs their own building stones. I am sooo opened minded.

 Moving to Bakersfield I saw closed minds casting stones. I know how it feels. At a young age, I learned I did not deserve to receive Catholic Eucharist. I survived arguments with narrow-minded pastors about Jesus’ trust in me. I wanted to confront Bishop Schofield about my worthiness as a woman at my daughter’s Confirmation. I was held back. As a God fearing scientist, I debated creationism with Father Lawrence. I was insulted when an Episcopalian friend needed to be re-baptized by full immersion at Riverlakes. I get angry but remain calm and collect my thoughts.

 I am offended by Evangelicals ashamed that we are all called Christians together. I cringe when I read on Facebook sermons of the Religious Right. I want to send back comments of blasphemous rants. Who am I to contradict renowned theologians? They have their bigoted foundations their mega churches. Theirs is a fortressed faith built of stones thrown down to inflict self-righteous pain. I silently keep my tongue. My silence becomes invisible stones

 I am denying Jesus, by not confronting others about their superficial misconceptions of Jesus’ words and actions. Like Peter, I am hiding in a back room by not shouting out my personal understanding of Jesus’ sacrifice for all people. I do not cry out as Mary does my vision of my risen Messiah. In the Gospel of Thomas, Peter is offended that she sits among the Disciples. Jesus defends Mary saying she is worthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Gospel of Mary, she speaks with knowledge of Jesus born of intimacy. Cast out as a woman her familiarity suspect. Can I presume to reveal the meaning of Jesus’ sacrifice?

 I am a mere female, a sinner. In Julian’s revelation she hears Jesus “‘It was necessary that there should be sin; but all shall be well, and **all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well, [his]** words were said most tenderly, showing no manner of blame to me.” She continues, “Then were it a great unkindness to blame or wonder on God for my sin, since He blames not me for sin.”

 God does not blame me for being woman. Nor does He blame anyone for who they are because all substance is in God. We are all multi-faceted creatures of God. There is no sin for being one’s self. We are all are that Jesus’ loves. All around me, stones cast by those who do not understand Jesus’ love for all humanity.

 At St. Paul’s I can be myself forgetting painful stones. Loved for who I am. I believe in free speech. Any censorship abhors me I do not want anyone to lose their freedom of voice. You listen to me as l listen to you without conflict. I will not protest it becomes violent. Violence diminishes the message. I will help you paint your forceful marching banners. I do not have the confidence to post my musings as Father Vern does. You allow me up here anyway. I cannot evangelize. I convert people by example living and speaking as Jesus. You accept my hesitance staying inside not on the street corner.

 I -We are Peter building stones of St. Paul’s hewn form the mother matrix Jesus. We need to listen to Julian. Our hazel nutty pebbles of faith as “all things [has] their beginning by the love of God. We seek rest in this thing which is so little, in which there is no rest.”

 We do not rest. We care for all who enter these doors from secure homes, broken homes and no homes. We are in the community reading to schoolchildren, building for Habitat for Humanity, visiting the lonely. We write the prisoner. We bring the Eucharist to the sick. Our rock foundation is caring not hurting. Our stones are soothing.

 We are strong because our Father God created us, our Mother Jesus bore us and the Holy Spirit nurtures us.