

Lent Meditations with Julian of Norwich – Week 2 (Tuesday 02 March)



Julian's first vision was of the crucifix that was held up for her to rest her eyes on during her final hours. As she explains:

'That's when my sight began to fail. Everything grew dim, until the whole room was as dark as night. The only thing I could see was the cross, which was bathed in a rather ordinary light. I couldn't figure out how it was possible that only this single object was illuminated. Everything except the cross looked ugly to me, as if it were all tainted by demons.

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All of a sudden, I saw the red blood trickling down from under his garland of thorns. The blood flowed hot and fresh, just as abundantly as it had during the time of his passion when the actual thorns pressed into his blessed head. As I watched, I realized that it was Christ himself who was showing this vision to me—he who was both God and man, who suffered like this for me—and that he was revealing himself directly, without anyone or anything between us. In the midst of this showing the blessed Trinity also revealed itself to me and filled my heart to overflowing with joy. I realized that this is what it will be like in the world to come, for all beings, and for all time. For the Trinity is God, and God is the Trinity. The Trinity is our creator and our sustainer, our Beloved forever and ever, our endless joy and bliss. I saw all this in the first revelation and in every showing after that. Whenever Christ appeared, I seemed to understand the blessed Trinity, as well.'

This is typical Julian. She sees a vision of Christ on the cross, sees his suffering, but is in the same instant filled with joy. Joy because she is shown the deeper meaning, the love that undergirds all.

The best of all for Julian, is that our Lord is her friend. Christ explains to her that his friendship is like that of a nobleman to a simple commoner: 'The highest honor a person of power can give to a less powerful person is friendliness, especially when he enthusiastically demonstrates his affection, both in private and in public. This makes the less powerful person think, *Oh! How could such a noble being honor me any more completely and give me any greater joy than to share with me (who is so ordinary) his personal friendship? This means far more to me than if he were to lavish me with expensive gifts but treat me in a cold and distant manner.*'

When you look at His face, do you meet with a friend? Can you see the love he has for you?



'Of all the showings revealed to me, the one that gave me the most comfort was that our sweet Lord—who is infinitely exalted and alone is worthy of worship—is also utterly simple and friendly. This realization filled me to overflowing with feelings of delight and soul-safety.

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This showing was so vivid and uplifting, it ravished my heart, and in light of his tender intimacy, I lost myself in joy and almost forgot who I was altogether. That's how it is with our sweet Lord. The one who is highest and mightiest, most noble and honorable, is also nearest and gentlest, most humble and accessible. Someday we

shall all see him face-to-face, and he will personally manifest his friendship to each one of us. Our Beloved wants us to believe this with all our hearts—to trust in this and rejoice in it—and use this promise to console ourselves as best we can, with his grace and his help, until the time comes when we experience it for ourselves. As I see it, the greatest blessing we could ever receive is this wonderful courtesy and familiarity from our Father, who is our Creator, through our sweet Jesus Christ, who is our Brother and our Savior.'

As we come together again, we will close our meditation by saying The Grace together:

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit be with us all
evermore.**

Amen.

Afterwards, those of us who would like to stay and exchange a little of what that was like, or what came to us in the silence, are very welcome to do so, but this is entirely up to each one to do what feels right for them.

Tim Bentley mentioned a good BBC program about Julian and her manuscript and how it was preserved and found. Here it is: <https://youtu.be/VptjqJN8wy0>

Very interesting – thank you, Tim for finding it again!

Further reading about Julian and some good translations (from the Middle English) of her *Revelations*:

Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (Penguin Classics, transl. Elizabeth Spearing, 1978)

Julian of Norwich, *The Showings – A Contemporary Translation* (Canterbury Press, transl. Mirabai Starr, 2014)

Upjohn, Sheila, *The Way of Julian of Norwich – a Prayer Journey through Lent* (SPCK, 2020)

Pennington, Emma, *At the Foot of the Cross with Julian of Norwich* (BRF, 2020)

Emma is Canon Missioner at Canterbury Cathedral. She has also produced a very interesting series of short talks, called "*Julian of Norwich: A medieval take on lockdown and how to survive it*". They are available via the Canterbury Cathedral website:

<https://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/julian-of-norwich-a-medieval-take-on-lockdown-and-how-to-survive-it/>

Well worth having a look at!