

Julian of Norwich

Friday 8 May 2020

On this day in the year 1373, when Julian of Norwich was thirty years old and suffering from what was considered to be a terminal illness, she experienced a series of sixteen visions, which revealed aspects of the love of God.

After she recovered, she spent the next twenty years of her life pondering their meaning and recorded her conclusions in what became the first book written by a woman in English, *The Revelations of Divine Love*. She is therefore the first female theologian writing in the English language.

At an unknown time in her life, she became an anchoress attached to the Church of St Julian in Norwich, hence her name—we do not know her real, baptismal name.

She died around the year 1417.



The image above is [Portrait of a woman by Rogier van der Weyden](#). Please click on the image for more information.

Read more here about the hazelnut imagery in the intercessions [here](#) or [here](#).

All Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.

- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.
- The hymn is a Youtube link. Please hover the mouse over the link, press Ctrl and then return.

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HYMN [Brother sister, let me serve you](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

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All **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Gloria

This version of the Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All **Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.**

**Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for Julian of Norwich

Christ our true mother,
you have carried us within you,
laboured with us,
and brought us forth to bliss.
Enclose us in your care,
that in stumbling we may not fall,
nor be overcome by evil,
but know that all shall be well.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the First Book of the Kings

Elijah came to a cave and spent the night there. The word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

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He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. *1 Kings 19:9-13a*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. *1 Corinthians 13:8-13*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.'

After she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For

whom are you looking?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”.’

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her. *John 20:11-18*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Julian of Norwich was the anonymous writer of the first major theological written in the English language. Everything beforehand was in Latin, Anglo Saxon, or Medieval French. She was also the first woman to write theology in English.

Julian was writing in the fourteenth century after a major outbreak of the plague. She nearly died (presumably of plague) and had a series of profound visions during what today we’d call a ‘near-death experience’. She then spent twenty years or so meditating on those visions. Her book *Revelations of Divine Love* is a wonderful exploration of what she saw and heard, and of the God who spoke to her in her visions.

What was Julian’s conclusion? The clue’s in the title. God is love and nothing but love. God can do nothing that is not loving. Julian struggles to explain and explore such a vast love, though she tries very, very hard. Her God is too loving to be capable of anger or wrath or unfairness. While she certainly believes in the devil she does not believe in hell so, for her, judgement becomes an opportunity to put things right.

Julian’s God is also too vast to be constrained by gender. He is God our Father but as loving as the most loving mother. Jesus adopted that same idea when (in Matthew 23:37) he talks of being like a mother hen.

Julian next seeks to respond to a God capable of such vast love. Our proper response is to love him in return ... *but how?* If God is love (1 John 4) and if God gives of himself to us, then he is giving us love. We are to use that love as a means of loving God. In effect we are loving God with Himself. Think of a ship coming in to dock at a harbour: a sailor on deck throws a loop of rope round a bollard on the harbour and pulls hard as a means of bringing the ship to its berth. The rope is attached at one end

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to the ship and is held fast the other by the seaman. In the same way, God's love starts with God and we hand it back to God. We're held in its loop as God pulls us heavenward.

We can also take Julian's image and apply it to the Scriptures. God is love (1 John 4). Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5) and a gift of the Spirit (Romans 12). Jesus gives a New Commandment to love (John 13:34). Jesus is telling us to love God by using the love given to us by God. We again see the idea of humans loving God with the love given us by God. No wonder Julian of Norwich adopted the catchphrase, 'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and manner of things shall be well.'

Today in the Church calendar we remember a visionary of love. Julian teaches us to love God—but all the saints do that. But she then teaches us *how* to love God.

Prayers of intercession

Imagine we hold a small round hazelnut in our hand.

Like Julian, I want you to wonder how this fragile little thing exists.

Isn't it incredible that there isn't any hazelnut in all creation that's exactly like the one you're holding now in your mind?

How does this hazelnut manage to continue to exist?

God showed me in my palm a little thing round as a ball about the size of a hazelnut.

I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and asked myself:

What is this thing?

And I was answered:

It is everything that is created.

I wondered how it could survive since it seemed so little it could suddenly disintegrate into nothing.

The answer came:

It endures, and ever will endure, because God loves it.

And so everything has its being because of God's love.

God loves it.

Plain and simple.

God loves you.

Plain and simple.

Nothing would exist without the sustaining power and love of God.

Let us give thanks in our hearts for that love ...

Let us give thanks that God loves our world.

Even those places where darkness reigns.

Where young girls are stolen away to be sold.

Even where death and disease are rife,

All God loves them all.

Let us give thanks that God loves our Church.

Even when we argue and fight and lose faith.

Even when we forget what we should be doing, feeding the poor and hungry, loving one another,

All God loves them all.

Let us give thanks that God loves those who are ill, those who are alone, those who suffer for disease or addiction.

We name them now ...

Even when we forget them,

All God loves them all.

Let us give thanks that God will welcome us all home in time.

Even when we are fearful of death, help us remember that we will be going home.

All God loves us all.

All shall be well, and all shall be well,

and all manner of things shall be well.

All Amen

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The peace

May the God of peace sanctify you: may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before him at the coming of our Lord Jesus with his saints.

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

All And also with you.

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The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy
that we should always sing of your glory,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.
For you are the hope of the nations,
the builder of the city that is to come.
Your love made visible in Jesus Christ
brings home the lost,
restores the sinner
and gives dignity to the despised.
In his face your light shines out,
flooding lives with goodness and truth,
gathering into one in your kingdom
a divided and broken humanity.
Therefore with all who can give voice in your creation
we glorify your name,
for ever praising you and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

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We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Julian of Norwich, St Barnabas and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink

in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.**

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Merciful God,
who gave such grace to your servant Julian
that she served you with singleness of heart
and loved you above all things:
help us, whose communion with you
has been renewed in this sacrament,
to forsake all that holds us back from following Christ
and to grow into his likeness from glory to glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

**All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.**