

PRAYER GROUP

May 13, 2020

A TIME FOR A CHECK-IN

GREETING

Leader: Jesus said,
“Where two or three are gathered in my name,
there am I, in the midst of them.”

LIGHTING THE CANDLE

Leader: We light this candle as a reminder that Jesus,
who is for us the light of the world,
will be with us always,
even until the end of the age.

A BRIEF WORD ABOUT “ONEING”

SCRIPTURE READING John 14:18-21,25-27

¹⁸ I won't leave you like orphans. I will come back to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the people of this world won't be able to see me, but you will see me. And because I live, you will live. ²⁰ Then you will know that I am one with the Father. You will know that you are one with me, and I am one with you. ²¹ If you love me, you will do what I have said, and my Father will love you. I will also love you and show you what I am like...

²⁵ I have told you these things while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Holy Spirit will come and help^[d] you, because the Father will send the Spirit to take my place. The Spirit will teach you everything and will remind you of what I said while I was with you.

²⁷ I give you peace, the kind of peace that only I can give. It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid.

AN INVITATION INTO STILLNESS

Richard Bott

Breathe in.

Know the Holy Spirit is around,
and in,
and with you.

Breathe out.

Know that all creation is dancing,
arm in arm with the Creator.

Breathe in.

Know that the peace of Christ,
the peace that passes all understanding,
rests and remains with all things,
all creatures, all people,
all places, all times.

Breathe, beloved siblings.,

and know that each breath
is a prayer -
of lament and of joy,
of hallelujah, whole or broken,
but always holy.

Breathe.

PRAYER

Reader: Christ, as a light illumine and guide us.
Christ, as a shield overshadow us.

All: **Christ under us; Christ over us;
Christ beside us on our left and our right.**

Reader: This day be within and without us,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

Reader: Be in the heart of each to whom we speak;
in the mouth of each who speaks unto us.

Reader: This day be within and without us,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.

All: **Christ as a light; Christ as a shield;
Christ beside us on our left and our right.**

A VIDEO OPENING PRAYER “Welcoming,” *The Work of the People*

AN INTRODUCTION TO JULIAN OF NORWICH

“A Mystic for Our Times” *Richard Rohr, CAC, Sunday, May 10, 2020*

Recently I have again been reading Lady Julian of Norwich (1342-1416), one of my all-time favorite mystics. Each time I return to her writings, I always find something new.

Julian experienced her sixteen visions, or “showings” as she called them, all on one May night in 1373 when she was very sick and near death. As a priest held a crucifix in front of her, Julian saw Jesus suffering on the cross and heard him speaking to her for several hours.

Like all mystics, she realized that what Jesus was saying about himself, he was simultaneously saying about all of reality. That is what unitive consciousness allows you to see.

Afterwards, Julian felt the need to go apart and reflect on her profound experience. She asked the bishop to enclose her in an anchor-hold, built against the side of St. Julian's Church in Norwich, England. Julian was later named after that church.

We do not know her real name, since she never signed her writing. (Talk about loss of ego!) The anchor-hold had a window into the church that allowed Julian to attend Mass and another window so she could counsel and pray over people who came to visit her. Such anchor-holds were found all over 13th- and 14th-century Europe.

*Julian first wrote a short text about the showings, but then she patiently spent twenty years in contemplation and prayer, trusting God to help her discern the deeper meanings to be found in the visions. Finally, she wrote a longer text, titled *Revelations of Divine Love*. Julian's interpretation of her God-experience is unlike the religious views common for most of history up to her time. It is not based in sin, shame, guilt, fear of God or hell. Instead, it is full of delight, freedom, intimacy, and cosmic hope. How did she retain such freedom, we ask? Maybe and precisely because she was not a priest, ordained to speak the party line?*

As I read her words this time, what strikes me is the similarity between Julian's time and our own. Here is how author, scholar, and Episcopal priest Mary Earle describes Julian's fourteenth-century context:

Julian lived at a time of vast social, [religious,] and political upheaval, incessant wars, and sweeping epidemics. Norwich, with a population of around 25,000 by 1330 . . . was struck viciously by the plague known as the Black Death. At its peak in the late 1340s in England, it killed approximately three-fourths of the population of Norwich. A young girl at this time, Julian was certainly affected in untold ways by this devastation. When the plague returned, she was about nineteen. . . . [1]

In her anchor-hold, Julian may have recognized the potential spiritual benefits of “social distancing” during a time of crisis, such as the awakened ability through solitude to be personally present to divine love. Yet we must remember that she also let God’s love flow right through her to those on the street requesting her counsel, and to us through her writings

A VIDEO REFLECTION “All Shall Be Well” —*The Work of the People,*
used with permission

REFLECTION “A Perennial Wisdom” (from CAC)

Although Julian of Norwich is an anonymous woman who lived over 600 years ago, seekers and scholars return to her “showings” again and again. Author Veronica Mary Rolf describes why Julian’s wisdom is perennial, valuable, and needed whenever there is confusion and suffering, which is to say, in every time and place. Rolf writes:

Perhaps the best answer to the question “Why Julian now?” is that in our age of uncertainty, inconceivable suffering, and seemingly perpetual violence and war (not unlike fourteenth-century Europe), Julian shows us the way toward contemplative peace. . . .

In a world of deadly diseases and ecological disasters, Julian teaches us how to endure pain in patience and trust that Christ is working to transform every cross into resurrected glory. . . .

Moreover, across six centuries, Julian's voice speaks to us about love. She communicates *personally*, as if she were very much with us here and now. Even more than theological explanations, we all hunger for love. Our hearts yearn for someone we can trust absolutely—divine love that can never fail. Julian reveals this love because, like Mary Magdalene, she *experienced* it firsthand. . . .

Precisely because she had the courage of her convictions, Julian of Norwich became the first woman ever to write a book in the English language. . . . Even more, this “unlettered” woman developed a mystical theology that was second to none during the fourteenth century and that continues to break barriers in our own time. . . .

Julian is also emotionally raw, often tempted by self-doubt and discouragement, yet constantly renewed in hope. She does something extremely dangerous for a layperson living in the fourteenth century: she discloses her conflict between the predominant medieval idea of a judgmental and wrathful God and her direct experience of the unconditional love of Christ on the cross. . . .

Why is Julian so appealing [today](#)? I think because she is totally vulnerable and transparently honest, without any guile. She is “homely”; in medieval terms, that means down-to-earth, familiar, and easily accessible. She is keenly aware of her spiritual brokenness and longs to be healed. So do we. She experiences great suffering of body, mind, and soul. So do we. She has moments of doubt. So do we.

She seeks answers to age-old questions. So do we. Then, at a critical turning point in her revelations, she is overwhelmed by joy and “gramercy” (great thanks) for the graces she is receiving. We, too, are suddenly granted graces and filled to overflowing with gratitude. Sometimes, we even experience our own divine revelations.

Again, and again, Julian reassures each one of us that we are loved by God, *unconditionally*. In her writings, we hear Christ telling us, just as he told Julian, “I love you and you love me, and our love shall never be separated in two.” [1]

GATEWAY TO ACTION & CONTEMPLATION:

What word or phrase resonates with or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine to do?

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens.

Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world.

We pray for those who struggle...

We pray for those who struggle at this time of huge uncertainty;

for political leaders faced with unforeseen challenges, uncharted ways, difficult decisions...

(time of silent reflection)

We pray for those who struggle.

We pray for those in situations never before experienced...

We pray for moms and dads who struggle with having children at home all day...

It is difficult to find new activities; it is hard to stay creative.

Holy One, we will listen carefully to the challenges, we will encourage fresh ways of communication with good friends.

(time of silent reflection)

We pray for those who struggle.

We pray for those whose day is radically different...

We pray for those who must leave their usual workspace, for those breadwinners who must work at home...

Holy One, we will support the new priorities, we will not intrude into the working hours. *(time of silent reflection)*

We pray for those who struggle.

We pray for those who have lost their jobs...

We pray for those whose financial security has gone, who have anxiety around paying rent or providing for family needs...

Holy One, we will be there in the testing times, we will assure them of their self-worth. *(time of silent reflection)*

We pray for those who struggle.

We pray for those who have been affected
by the Covid 19 virus...

Those who are sick at home
and those who have been hospitalized,
in their suffering, and in their fear...

Holy One, we will hear and respond to their distress,
we will be a safe but compassionate presence
to their loved ones. *(time of silent reflection)*

Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking,
we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God,
AMEN.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

WORDS OF BLESSING

Leader: May the peace of Christ go with us,
wherever God may send us.

May God guide us through the wilderness,
protect us through the storm.

May God bring us home rejoicing
at the wonders we've been shown.

May God bring us home rejoicing
once again into these doors. Amen