

Dear Friends,

The city of Norwich, in the county of Norfolk, is the largest city in the East Anglia region of England. It's well known for its two cathedrals, Anglican and Catholic, and its mediaeval cobbled streets, as well as for its football team, known as "the Canaries" because of the color of their shirts. But it's also known for Julian of Norwich, a woman who lived in the fourteenth century. Julian became an anchoress. Living her life alone in a cell attached to a church in the city, she devoted herself to prayer, meditation and study. It was as if she was dead to this world and alive completely to God. As such she was highly regarded by the people of the town, who valued her as a spiritual treasure and resource, to whom they would go for counsel and advice in the troubles of life.

The world of those days had many troubles to cope with. The Black Death had decimated the population. Wars were frequent and there was social turmoil all around. Julian had suffered her own bout of illness that had brought her to death's door, and it was her recovery from that illness that led her subsequent life of prayer, lived faithfully in the midst of a busy town. Long after her death, her writings were discovered and published as the book *Revelations of Divine Love*, in which Julian has left us a deeply powerful teaching about God's love for us. In her own words she tells us, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

Our world, like Julian's world, is full of woe. The airwaves are filled with noisy rancor and argument. Famine, drought and disease afflict people in many countries around the world. Climate change, and the environmental devastation that it can bring, is a growing threat. Wars continue and people struggle to live safe and secure lives. It is easy to lose heart, to give up the fight and to lose all hope for better days. At times it seems as if evil is all around us, and God does nothing. Such thoughts are very tempting. Indeed many people conclude that there can be no God if this is how the world is allowed to be.

Jesus must have been aware of thoughts and attitudes such as these. Why does such cruelty and injustice go unpunished? Today we hear a story that Jesus told, a parable, a picture to help us understand why the world is the way it is. A field of wheat gently growing is damaged by the introduction and planting of darnel, which looks very much the same as wheat, but which is in fact poisonous. Shall we uproot it? No. Let things be till harvest time, and then all shall be put right. It is hard to be patient with the hurt and harm we see being done in our world. But we cannot mend this broken world ourselves, and violent force will not solve our problems. God is patient, which means God suffers, and that is the road we can follow.

In the teaching of Julian of Norwich we hear that the love of Jesus for us is as a mother's love. It is that tender, and that consoling and that powerful. Love such as this can bring healing balm to our world. Love is the greatest healing power that we can know. It embraces us always and heals all our hurts. Such is the love of Jesus for us. We see it displayed most powerfully in the arms of the Lord extended on the cross. This was the very vision that Julian saw in her own days of illness and near death. This is the message she gives for our salvation.

Your friend in Jesus
Msgr. Zach