

Seeing Things Whole with Julian of Norwich

With Marjory Zoet Bankson

Have you ever pondered the size of an oak tree when holding an acorn in your hand? Or seen God as a comforting mother when you dropped food on the floor? If so, Julian of Norwich may be the 14th century spiritual guide for you. If not, she may simply surprise you with hope and gladness in this time of pandemic isolation.

In 1373, at the age of 30, Julian had a near-death experience which revealed to her the unified field of divine love. More than a decade later, she took the radical step of becoming an anchoress, attached to the Church of St. Julian in Norwich. There she spent the next 30 years pondering, praying and writing her interpretation of those visions, first in a short text and later, as a more nuanced longer text.

As the Plague ravaged England and heretics were burned at the stake, Julian saw the wholeness of God beyond the contemporary chaos around her. She embraced God as a tenderly present mother and marveled at the implicate order of creation rather than claiming the judgment and punishment being preached in her day. In the face of desolation and destruction, she could still affirm, “All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”

A contemporary of Chaucer, Julian’s writings were (thankfully) not published in her lifetime. If so, they would probably have been burned. But now we have not only her radical vision of Christ as Mother, but the first literature written by a woman in English.

On this retreat, we will let Julian’s life and writings be our guide to reflect on our own lives and beliefs in the pandemic setting of today.

About the Facilitator:

A graduate of Radcliffe College (Harvard University), Marjory has an M.A. in American history from the University of Alaska and an honorary doctorate from Virginia Theological Seminary in 1999 -- cited for her work in lay ministry. She is a Steward at Seekers Church, where she preaches and teaches regularly (www.seekerschurch.org). As Chair of the Church of the Saviour Council, she publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Callings*, for the wider C of S community and curates the C of S website, inwardoutward.org.