

Daily Meditation 05/04/2023

Julian of Norwich: The Fullness of Joy is Our Birthright

Good morning.

We're continuing our meditations on joy this morning, as taught by Julian of Norwich, and one of the points she makes is that to find God in all things is to live in complete joy.

So discovering, experiencing, and being present to panentheism, the divine in all things, and all things in the Divine, is the source of joy. And she says that Jesus is joy, the incarnation of joy.

And in there, we learn to love everything that God loves. And God finds joy in things, in all creation. And we can too. In other words, not to get stuck with just our problems and our own particular pain.

Now you can see how utterly different this is. Julian lived in the 14th century. In the 16th century, 200 years later, theologians such as John Calvin would talk about life as a curse, and how life is totally wretched and humans are nothing but filth, inside and out, and subject to a horrible despair. Martin Luther talked about the world as the devil's kingdom and that humans should despair totally of themselves in order to be able to receive Christ's grace.

So the pessimism of society when patriarchy really took over...Julian turns her back on all of that. It's in that context that she says, "To behold God in all things is to live in complete joy." And she tells us that joy is our birthright, that we have a right to it that goes way, way back. We're here; therefore we are invited to a profound joy.

And she has seen this in her visions, even of the suffering Christ, there was joy. And the joyful face she saw was shown more than the other two faces, and continued the longest.

She says, "Bless the face that our Beloved turns toward us as a happy one, joyous and sweet." And she's talking about Jesus: "He sees us lost and love-longing, and wants to see a smile on our souls, because our delight is his reward."

And she cites Jesus; she had an encounter with Jesus, who said to her "Now all my bitter pain and cruel labor have been transformed into endless joy and bliss for me and for you."

Such a revelation, she says, "renders us all exceedingly happy. God wants us to rejoice with him in our liberation. Christ endlessly rejoices."

So she developed a theology of joy, profoundly rich and nuanced. And she invites us there. There where, Aquinas said, "humans undergo the noblest action."

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.