

Yesterday was the feast of one of my favorite saints of the church: St. Julian of Norwich.

Doubtless many of you are quite familiar with Julian. She lived in the latter half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A time of immense turmoil.

She lived in the midst of the 100 years war and all of the geopolitical strife that that caused.

She lived in the midst of great schisms in the church that resulted from the Avignon Papacy—all of the uncertainty that resulted from that major ongoing power struggle.

And above all, she lived during a time of plague. She herself became deathly ill as a young woman at the age of 30. She was so sick that a priest came and said last rites for her and her illness lasted 2 days after that. She was certain at that time that she was on her death bed.

And yet, she was delivered from her illness and restored to wholeness and strength and she was imparted with a vision which she wrote down and called her “showings,” titled Revelations of Divine Love. The first work written by a woman in the English language.

in the midst of all of that, Julian proclaimed with great assuredness, that God loved the world, and that all would be well.

Julian trusted that Christ would bring good out of all things.

We all now know what it is like to live in the midst of a plague time.

Julian is a saint for our time because her life and witness reminds us that God’s salvation does not mean the absence of suffering on this mortal coil.

Julian wrote, “If there is anywhere on earth a lover of God who is always kept safe, I know nothing of it, for it was not shown to me. But this was shown: that in falling and rising again, we are always kept in that same precious love.”

The gift of God’s salvation does not mean, as our compline service puts it, that we won’t be “wearied by the changes and chances of this life.”

Rather, as Julian put it, we have a courteous Lord who loves us completely. Who loves us through life. Who loves us so much that he performed the greatest act of empathy in history and came down

to be present with us, take on a human life. To feast with us at Cana and to weep with us at the tombs of our loved ones. To offer himself for us so completely, that he gave his very life for us that we might have life and have it abundantly.

We serve a God who is with us always. Through it all, even to the end.

We serve a God who is bringing us and all things to their fullness and their fulfillment.

We serve a God who loves us as a mother and a father, as a shepherd and a friend, who leaves the 99 to come and get each one of us and bring us home in loving arms.

That is the Good News we share as Christians in a world of bad news.

That is what Julian of Norwich meant, in spite of all of her sufferings, when she said, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.

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For Julian the message was all about God's great love for us which dovetails perfectly with our gospel lesson for today in which Jesus commands his

disciples to love one another as he has loved us. It's all about love.

This is a school of love. Our purpose is to Abide in God's love and to share that love with others.

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The more we dwell in the fullness of God's love, the more we are able to share it with others.

The more we love others the more we are able to abide in God's love. This is a cycle which deepens and spirals. This is what makes us holy. This is what prepares us for the kingdom.

The thing about this agape love that Jesus talks about is that it is a deep love that is not a love that is reserved for a spouse or a relative, or a friend but this kind of love can be shared with any of our fellow human beings.

St. Augustine speaks of the Trinity as a Father who loves a Beloved Son and the Spirit as the love that passes between them. Or as Lover, beloved, and love itself.

Amen.