



**Advent Daily Reflections
December 21, 2024**

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Today's reading is from Julian of Norwich:

And during that time that our Lord was showing in spiritual sight what I have just described, the bodily sight of plentiful bleeding from Christ's head remained, and as long as I could see this sight I kept saying, "Benedicite Dominus!" In this first showing from our Lord I saw six things in my understanding: the first is the signs of Christ's blessed Passion and the plentiful shedding of his precious blood; the second is the Maiden who is his beloved mother; the third is the blessed Godhead that ever was, is and ever shall be, almighty, all wisdom and all love. The fourth is all that he has made; it is vast and wide, fair and good, but it looked so small to me because I saw it in the presence of him that is Maker of all things; to a soul that sees the Maker of all, all that is made seems very small. The fifth thing I understood is that he made everything that is made for love; and the same love sustains everything, and shall do so for ever, as has been said before. The sixth is that God is everything that is good, and the goodness that is in everything is God. And all these our Lord showed me in the first vision, and gave me time and space to contemplate it. When the bodily vision stopped, the spiritual vision remained in my understanding. And I waited with reverent fear, rejoicing in what I saw and longing as far as I dared to see more if it was his will, or else to see the same vision for longer.

Today's Reflection is by Cindy Day:

The "plentiful bleeding" here is dramatic and vivid. It evokes pain and violence. I feel I need to address it before I can pivot to the love and goodness Saint Julian refers to in her "understandings". To add to the challenge, I've been battling COVID and haven't been keen on thinking about pain. I keep waiting to feel better so I can write a helpful, thoughtful reflection when my mind is clear, but my time has run out and perhaps pain is the point here. We're meant to focus our gaze on this uncomfortable truth and find the beauty in it, as Saint Julian does.

Even when I am well, I'm often concerned or worried. I experience moments of great joy and have much to be joyful for, but my daily existence is one of trying to wade through challenges rather than appreciate blessings. It's easy to focus on daily hurdles, frustrations, and physical pain. It's harder, when faced with all of that, to rise above it and make the effort to appreciate all of creation, the light and love that is pervasive throughout. But what if we consider it all together, as part of the same experience? What if our daily struggle is part of a sacrifice in service of our family's well being? To gain those moments of joy, where I listen to my son play music, or gather family around the dinner table, I have to muddle through hard work days, illness, and missed opportunities?

One moment in church consistently brings this into focus for me. For generations, my family has gone to a tiny church on a hilltop in New Jersey. My great grandmother's name appears in a stained glass window at the end of our pew. Ancestors and cousins fill a giant book of baptisms, weddings, and funerals. We walked my father's ashes up the aisle just above the spot where he taught Sunday school decades before. Every time I go to any church, I carry forward a small tradition I learned there, which is to pause and pray for a moment after communion. I give thanks to God for feeling connected to my family during that prayer. I feel both the sadness of their loss, and the strength of their love at the same time. I feel their care and presence, the fullness of their own experience, good and bad. I feel connected to something larger than myself, and inspired. That is my version of this understanding that St. Julian speaks of. It's a feeling more than an understanding, and it guides me toward light instead of darkness, especially in these darker months of the year.



Cindy Day lives in Bay Ridge with her husband, Derek, and 15 year old son, Remi. She works on privacy at Meta and enjoys writing and spending time in the Adirondacks. She's very happy to have found Holy Apostles.