

Julian of Norwich 8 May
Spiritual Teacher, c. 1417 — Commemoration

Julian (or Juliana) was a fourteenth-century Englishwoman who is known for one book, *The Revelations of Divine Love*. This work records sixteen visions which were granted to her on May eighth and ninth in 1373, with the fruit of twenty years' reflection on their meaning. Written in the English dialect of fourteenth-century Norfolk, her book is one of the undisputed masterpieces of mystical theology.

Little is known about Julian herself. From hints in her work, it is possible that she was once married, and she may also have been a mother. There is nothing to suggest that she was a professed nun or ever lived in a convent. In *The Revelations of Divine Love* she tells us that she experienced her visions when she was thirty years old and they came to her during an illness which brought her to the brink of death. Sometime after that, she took up the life of a recluse, living alone in a hovel attached to the parish church of St. Julian and St. Edward, Coniston. It was from the title of this church that she took the name Julian; and other contemporary documents attest that she was still living there in the second decade of the fifteenth century.

The heart of Julian's visions was the knowledge of God in the crucified Christ. Because the Saviour bore and nurtured a new humanity on the cross, she took up an image often employed by other spiritual teachers in the Middle Ages and likened him to a mother. This image of Christ, and all else in her book, found fulfillment in the divine love. For in everything that God showed her, Julian wrote, "Love was our Lord's meaning. And I saw for certain, both here and elsewhere, that before ever he made us, God loved us, and that his love has never slackened, nor ever shall."

See Readings, page 545.

Sentence

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.
1 John 4.8

Collect

Source and Partner of the eternal Word,
who brought to birth in the Lady Julian
many visions of your nurturing and sustaining love,
move our hearts, we pray,
to seek your will above all things,
that we may know the joy of your gifts
and embrace the gift that is simply yourself;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
our Saviour, Brother, and Mother,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Wisdom 7.21-30 Psalm 103.1-4, 13-18
Refrain: The goodness of the Lord endures for ever.
John 14.8-11

Prayer over the Gifts

God of mercy,
whose love has never slackened
nor ever shall,
heal our sight with the gift of faith,
that we may behold your Son
in the mystery of this table.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preface of a Saint

Prayer after Communion

Eternal God,
whose blessings overflow at this Table,
grant us the knowledge of your beloved Julian,
that we may keep the watch of prayer
and proclaim your marvellous wisdom
made manifest in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
whose love is sovereign over all creation.