

Art and Reflection: Julian of Norwich 8 May – prepared by Dr Sophia Errey

In addition to the deep and affirmative, yet hardly-won spirituality of her account of her visions - and her reflections on them - in *Revelations of Divine Love* Julian of Norwich (1343- after 1416) is perhaps particularly relevant to us right now as a woman who spent at least 23 years – and perhaps up to 44 - in self-isolation!

According to the rules for anchorites, once walled up in their cells they could receive visitors – as today, talking to them at the door – but never leave their cell. Julian, who may have become an anchorite around the age of thirty, occupied just one of about 36 cells in Norwich at the time, attached to some of the 63 churches and 22 religious foundations in the city.

Consider also that when Julian was five the city was ravaged by the Black Death, which killed around half of the total population and continued to recur over the next forty years. Indeed, some authorities suggest that her decision to become an anchorite was connected to the loss of all her family in a plague outbreak. Her cell, attached to the Church of St Julian, was long ago demolished. The church, which dated back to the 11th century, survived until the 19th century, when it was partly rebuilt, only to be destroyed by bombing in WW11 and totally reconstructed. The print shows it as it was before the 19th c restoration.



One of Julian's most famous and memorable images in the *Revelations* is that of the earth as a tiny thing like a hazelnut.

"When I saw the vision of his bleeding head, our Lord also showed my soul the unpretentious manner of his loving. I saw that for us he is everything that is good, comforting, and helpful. He is our clothing who wraps us up and holds us close for love..."

"And with this insight he also showed me a little thing, the size of a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand. It seemed to me as round as a ball. I gazed at it and thought, 'What can this be?' The answer came thus, 'It is everything that is made.' I marveled how this could be, for it was so small it seemed it might fall suddenly into nothingness. Then I heard the answer, 'It lasts, and ever shall last, because God loves it. All things have their being in this way by the grace of God.'" (Revelations of Divine Love, Chapter V)

In the icon by Br. Robert Lentz OFM we have a striking image drawing on Julian's writing combined with the now-famous views of our planet from space.

