



A Prayer of Julian of Norwich

In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss. In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving. You are our mother, brother, and savior. In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvelous and plenteous grace. You are our clothing; for love you wrap us and embrace us. You are our maker, our lover, our keeper. Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Amen

It seems that every week there is a new tragedy over which to groan. When I sit down to look at the prayers of intercession, I have to decide whether or not and how to add a petition for the latest victims of violence, war, or natural disasters. There is always something horrible going on in the world. Have things gotten worse?

Probably not. Looking back through history we can see that there have always been horrible things happening. At some point, the news media realized that the best way to grab and hold people's attention was to trigger either anger or fear. Very few contemporary news sources exist to give basic facts. Many are giving their opinions masquerading as facts. Even the ones that are doing their best to tell the truth, are selecting what true stories to share that will best engage an audience. Thus, the more "news" we watch, the more scared and/or angry we become.

One quick way to anger or terrify audiences is to point a finger at those *[insert group of other people]*. We love to categorize people, even ourselves at times, into groups. The divides between groups are getting bigger and the ability to be in a group and disagree with even one thing that group espouses can lead to shunning by other members.

I've had conversations with many of you in which you've told me that there are certain things you cannot discuss with friends and family, because you fear the result. You have experienced disagreeing with people that you love about certain issues and they have ridiculed you, labeled you, and cut off relations for a time. It has happened to me too and I don't like it. It is a deep pain that can take a lot of *work* to heal.

There are no easy answers, but I think that the Holy Spirit working through us *can* and *does* make a difference. I know it's hard, but the best chance we have, as people trying to follow Jesus Christ, is to begin by listening. If you aren't willing to listen to your friends and family that disagree, there is no chance of them listening to you. And I don't mean listen in order to prepare your argument. Debates do not foster trusting relationships. I mean listen with an agenda of love. Listen to them looking for ways to love them. That is the only way to restore trust in a relationship.

At the same time, we must work as individuals and community to give up our own fear and anger. We cannot love our neighbors while also fearing them. Anger is exhausting, so don't waste it on things that aren't even true. That is what so many of us are doing, when we make assumptions about what people believe. Everyone needs love. Everyone has love to give.

Some relationships may never heal completely. We may find ourselves grieving what we once had. But in the midst of that grief, rest in the knowledge that the One Who created you knows everything about you and loves you more than you could ever understand. As Julian of Norwich wrote in her famous prayer, "Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." Amen



Some Groups and Committees are taking off during July:

There will be no meeting of Council, Worship Committee, Christian Education Committee, nor Thursday Morning Book Group until August.

Angel Circle and Knitters/Crocheters will meet only once in July.

All other groups will meet according to their regular schedule.