



Advent Daily Reflections
December 19, 2024

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Today's reading is from Julian of Norwich:

In this blessed revelation God showed me three nothings. Of these nothings this was the first I was shown, and all men and women who wish to lead a contemplative life need to have knowledge of it: they should choose to set at nothing everything this is made, so as to have the love of God who is unmade. This is why those who choose to occupy themselves with earthly business and are always pursuing worldly success have nothing here of God in their hearts and souls: because they love and seek their rest in this little thing where there is no rest, and know nothing of God, who is almighty, all wise and all good, for he is true rest. God wishes to be known, and is pleased that we should rest in him; for all that is below him does nothing to satisfy us. And this is why, until all that is made seems as nothing, no soul can be at rest. When a soul sets all at nothing for love, to have him who is everything that is good, then it is able to receive spiritual rest

Today's Reflection is by Loyal Miles:

The initial words of today's reading are full of promise: In this blessed revelation God showed me...

Nothings?!

Eight times in today's reading, Saint Julian draws our attention to that word: Nothing. Thus, this brief text is seeded with the stark reminder of what losing track of God as we go about the business of our daily lives will leave us with.

Julian also reminds us of what is not nothing. Other words that appear at least three times in the short reading: God/him/he (9 times), knowledge/know/known (3), love (3), and rest (6). This last word feels the real linchpin advice: from our pursuit of human-made things, worldly cares, and earthly business, Rest!

Of course this all feels very sound. But in my own days jammed with my earthly business I must admit to my initial response being a shrug. My wife and I have two demanding jobs and are blessed with two young kids we love dearly who are already beginning to have their own busy lives. There's not much rest happening in our house, and to even hope for rest with its increasing impossibility feels a little irritating at best. And, yes, in that irritation I am aware of a loss of anything like true Sabbath, the need for which feels

hardwired not only in the ancient Commandments bestowed on Moses but also in the fundamentals of existence: between each beat of our hearts, each breath, and every night and day, Rest.

What I think I was hoping to sit with in this reflection is whether Saint Julian may be identifying rest as more the point of our lives than the daily business that fills the majority of at least my waking hours. But for me, this particular Advent season, I'm mostly still back at the idea of rest as something that comes between, at minimum a refueling, at best perhaps a bridge to some somewhat renewed version of self.

A quick glance at the etymology suggests that the congregants who more than 600 years ago may have interacted with an English Mystic had some sense of the word rest as, first, connected to death (as in lay to rest), and, second, for its routine use to mean a pause in a continuing journey. Combined, these meanings suggest a very Christian understanding: death only a pause in our journey.

So yes, life beyond death... a chance to know ourselves renewed... to live into a new life with God... His promises fulfilled... Advent!

I'm always on the lookout for action words: know, love, rest—if I'm counting right only two other active verbs show up in today's reading more than once: show (as in God will) and choose (as in what will we).



Loyal and his wife Lisa feel blessed to live a few blocks from Holy Apostles with their son Isaac (age 5) and daughter Frances (age 2). We're looking forward to being home for the holidays this year and are wishing everyone a Merry Christmas!