



3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – 14 April 2024: Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

***“All will be well”*** ‘St Julian of Norwich’ (Revelation of Divine Love Ch32)

I will always remember my pilgrimage visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel Genazzano not far from Rome as Covid was taking hold in Italy. A large flag was displayed on the outside wall of a small museum there with the words: “Tutto Andra Bene” – All Will be Well quotation from St Julian of Norwich (1343-1416) recorded in ‘Revelations of Divine Love’.

This past week I had the opportunity to visit the cell (attached to St Julian’s Church, Norwich) of Mother Julian who was an ‘anchorite’. It was while I spent some time in Norwich and the Broads after a visit to Walsingham. It was there that Mother Julian received these revelations or ‘shewings’; in 1373 she lived in at a time of turmoil, and she spoke of God’s omnibenevolence and love in terms of joy and compassion. Revelations of Divine Love contains a message of optimism based on certainty of being loved by God and of being protected by his Providence. Pope Benedict XVI discussed her life and teaching at a General Audience on 1 December 2010, stating: *“Julian of Norwich understood the central message of the spiritual life: God is love and it is only if one opens oneself to this love, totally and with total trust, and lets it become one’s sole guide in life, that all things are transfigured, true peace and true joy found and one is able to radiate it.”*

It was a special blessing to have the opportunity to visit the cell where Mother Julian experienced these “shewings” and to learn about the celebrations around the 650<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of these taking place 8 May 2023. Pope Francis wrote to Rt. Rev. Peter Collins Bishop of East Anglia: *“Of particular note in Julian’s generosity is welcoming those who sought spiritual counsel and encouragement. This willingness to sacrifice self-convenience for the sake of others is especially needed in responding to the endemic problems of isolation and loneliness felt by so many in the more materially affluent nations of the world. In this regard, it is my hope that through a greater appreciation of the life of Mother Julian, Christians today will be encouraged to follow ever more faithfully and joyfully the example of Jesus, the one who came ‘not to be served, but to serve’ (Mt 20:28).”*

Like me, you may have watched on TV the total solar eclipse this week: it was interesting to see the different reactions to the rare event, and especially for me to hear many saying there was something spiritual about it all. It reminds me of the article in the Catholic Review where the author, Rita Buettner, writes of her father taking her in younger days (when she was a 9 year old) to see Halley’s Comet: it’s only visible every 76 years. She wrote *“as we were standing there, a light streaked across the sky – a single*

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*shooting star...it just happened to be there for us in that instant – a true gift, the icing on the cake of a wonder-filled adventure.... As we drove home the sun was coming up. The world was exciting and new. I was so happy to have seen Halley's Comet, and I couldn't get over the bonus of seeing a shooting star...." She concludes: "O God, how great thou art".*

It reminded me of the day I was out on Lake Bracciano, just outside Rome, as a young student, and experiencing the beautiful blue sky and the extraordinary light reflecting on the lake: my thoughts went to Psalm 8 too *"O Lord, how great thou art"*. I just couldn't and can't believe our beautiful world is just an accident, that there isn't a creator behind it!

The Gospel for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter recounts the appearances of Jesus after His Resurrection: you are drawn into the amazement of the Disciples who were joined by the Risen Jesus at a meal, and His eating grilled fish before their eyes. From these different experiences, including the supper at Emmaus, which is referred to at the beginning of this section of St Luke Chapter 24, you can see the Risen Lord is beyond our personal experience, and yet through the account of the inspired writer we are very aware of the reality of what is taking place. We are led, I feel to reflect on the Eucharist we are celebrating today and the reality of Jesus' presence with us. The Sunday Connection commentary ends: *"our celebration of the Mass is an encounter with Jesus, through the Word and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. As Jesus commissions his disciples to be witnesses to what scriptures foretold, our celebration of the Eucharist commissions us."*

May we make space in our lives for wonder! St Brendan (quoted by Rita Buettner) said *"if you become Christ's you will stumble upon wonder upon wonder and everyone one of them true."* Despite the presence of evil in our midst, *"all things shall be well"* especially through the wonder of the presence of Jesus with us in the Eucharist!

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