



Julian Jottings

Thoughts on Things Spiritual

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FOR ALL THE SAINTS

Mthr. Hilary OJN

“What we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.”

“What we will be has not yet been revealed.” And that’s probably a good thing—remember the disciples exposed to the transfigured and then the resurrected Jesus. If we were to see the form that the saints, our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers have now taken, the clarity and solidity of their life, light and joy, it would probably undo us. But their lives here had been such as to prepare them to bear the weight of divine reality. They are now like Jesus; they see Jesus as he is, as T. S. Eliot says, in “a condition of complete simplicity, costing not less than everything.” That is a thing for which we are still being prepared. “And all who have this hope in Jesus purify themselves, just as he is pure.” It is the particular means of this process of purification that I want to speak somewhat of.

Viktor Frankl said, “What is to give light must endure burning.” The constant drone note under the melody of today’s readings is suffering. Reading the lives of the saints, the preponderance of evidence is that suffering seems to be the preferred means by which holiness and wisdom come into being.

Someone around here is fond of saying “it’s good to be known.” And it is. And this, in a very small space, is the bracingly acute effect any of our present suffering is meant to have. Suffering of all kinds is meant to question us, to purify as though by burning anything in us that prevents complete availability to love, anything that obstructs complete transparency to light. The sword of Love tries us, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Suffering is meant to show us to ourselves, and inevitably, to each other, working pretty equally to both public honor and public embarrassment.

In his poem “Little Gidding”, T. S. Eliot describes this process of revelation, the learning about one’s self the things that Love already knows: “Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age/ To set a crown upon your lifetime’s effort...the rending pain of re-enactment/ Of all that you have done, and been; the shame/ Of motives late revealed, and the awareness/ Of things ill done and done to others’ harm/ Which once you took for exercise of virtue.”

Our life together here, in all its varied joy and trial, has—and is meant to have—the effect of conforming us to Love, curing in us the distortions that cause us to settle for pain-free illusion, to mistake easy counterfeits for what is real. If we ask anything less than the fullness of the divine life, the “condition of complete simplicity,” it will cost us everything. It will cost us all our illusions, idolatries, inordinate preferences, everything in us that is not yet in accord with Love.

Can we say to this process, “Be it unto me according to your word?” The good news is we are not alone in this work of assent to Love, for all the saints assist us. Borrowing again T.S. Eliot borrowing Julian, “And all shall be well and/ all manner of thing shall be well/ By the purification of the motive/ in the ground of our beseeching.”






**VOCATION TO BE—CALLED TO BE
THAT I MAY ASSUME THE DIGNITY OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Anne Noble ObjN

We are called to Be: our unique selves in relationship, to God, to our selves, to one another in God—in whom we live, and move, and have our Being. For there is nothing apart from God—but this for us is a growing realisation.

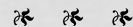
Our dignity as human beings is that we know we are unique—individual Be-ing—and we know that we are individual by seeing other individuals other than ourselves. We also know that there is the Other—as Christ said, “There is the One, greater than I”. The One—of the same kind, but very much another degree.



We all have a longing to be special—and so we are, by right; but not more special than anyone else—an aspiration that is not our right, and has to be let go.

Our true “specialness” involves cooperation. God has loved us into Being; our response, our cooperation, is to live Life, uniquely, and echo back day by day our defined experience to our Undefined Source—and that means defining pain and pleasure in no uncertain manner. For how does God know what it is like to be human unless we say? Unless we convey? And say and convey we must, to God and to one another and to ourselves. It is a favour we are called upon to bestow.

The truer we are to our individuality, the richer we make each other. For the greatest gift we can give to one another is by being most truly one’s self. And no one delights more in communication, in community, than the Author and Giver of Life. The Giver to the Receiver—the Receiver back to the Giver—the Dance of reciprocity in equal delight—the Dance of Life itself.



Anne Noble (1918-2008) was professed as an Oblate of the Order in 1987. This excerpt is from a booklet of her writings being prepared by her estate.

TOWARD OPENNESS

Vickie Beck AOJN

Of the four concepts guiding our life in the Order of Julian—Await, Allow, Accept, Attend—“Accept” seems to have occupied most of my thoughts this year, and possibly it has every year, as I’ve grown into this way of reflecting.

Accept seems to be a simple, easily understood word: everyone accepts all sorts of things, from large to small, positive and apparently negative, every day.

However, acceptance of the apparently negative, in particular, acceptance of loss of physical function or acceptance of some other physical difference or perceived deficiency, including chronic and escalating conditions, requires considerable and continuing thought, strength and prayer. Of course, the experience of disability is always unique and individual, as is the perception it provides. So, please understand these words are no more than my view.

Accepting such things doesn’t mean accepting less, or stoically accepting something disturbing or different. It also doesn’t mean accepting something better, special or a gift that sets us apart. Most importantly, it doesn’t mean that we no longer ever struggle with these situations, or never have extremely doubtful, difficult days.

Accepting means taking the differences, perceived deficiencies and limitations, and living the best we can with them. Loss of physical function is a basic fact of life, as is disability and the presence of chronic conditions, including, for me, fairly constant pain, among other things. Once we can see these situations as no more than just part of life, and then as just a typical part of any individual life, especially our own, then we can accept them.

Acceptance means not using these differences or conditions to gain status, pity or attention, or to manipulate others, and not separating them from our whole selves. In other words, my body doesn’t have multiple disabilities, I do. For me, it’s been important to finally accept my body as part of myself; while not the most important part, it is an unavoidable, undeniable part. When we reach this understanding, then we have an opportunity to accept the gift of God’s presence within these conditions and/or differences.

Ultimately, true acceptance of difference, physical inability, loss of function, even the presence of chronic, often constant, physical pain, can become a way to connect to God (not in pleading for change but through an understanding of shared experience—my God felt, endured and accepted difference, discrimination and pain), paths to trust and sources of growth, strength and understanding.

In the quiet of night, and throughout the continuous moments of every day, the question of acceptance is always present for me. And finally, I know that God is with me, and whatever happens within the arena of acceptance, it is fine; it will be fine. The more I can accept what is, the more I can understand acceptance as a lifelong process, the more open I become to God and the world around me.



ON DESIRING ONE THING

The Day of the Lord as the coming of the Bridegroom charges the disciples not only to 'be prepared' for His coming, but to look forward to it as something for which they long with all their hearts. Jesus's illustration of the lamp and its care, that particular call which each of them has received, can be understood as a warning to travel light so that nothing gets in the way of their readiness, that they may live unencumbered and with intention.

What this is for is the kingdom that, as His disciples, they are also charged with announcing. The Bridegroom expects to find them with lamps burning and thus they must tend to the light they have been entrusted with. So those awaiting his arrival have less to do with preparing for an event that will happen some time in the future as being continually ready to be the point at which the kingdom may enter at each moment in whatever unnoticed way.

Those who live in such readiness have already begun the banquet and have already entered the kingdom and already are in the Bridegroom's company, because they are those who are realising the kingdom in the world by letting it break out into the world through them. For them Jesus has become everything, He is their most present reality; they are constantly attentive to Him, and living in Him they are heaven reaching into the world. Where there is choice the law of all action is not available time but value. If they value this they will act on it as if nothing else mattered, for they don't have time to throw away.

