

## Reflection

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MOTHERS DAY

May 9, 2021

John 15:9-17

*Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."*

The human condition. *What it means to be human and what we all have in common.*

The human condition is all of the characteristics and key events that compose the essentials of human existence—birth, growth, emotion, aspiration, conflict, and mortality. It raised huge questions—pondered and analyzed from many perspectives in religion, philosophy, history, art, literature, anthropology, psychology, and biology. It is often used when speaking of ambiguous subjects—things that we are most concerned about—like the meaning of life or moral concerns.

The human condition. Grappling with the essentials of the human condition may be puzzling, but it is also unifying. Because *we are all in this together*. Early in 2020, a few of us from Epiphany went to Washington together to witness a piece of the early Black Lives Matter movement. We saw hundreds of people gathered in the streets coming together to express their frustration and anger. Mostly what we saw was that we, the five of us, were way outnumbered. We were clearly the *old people*. The crowds were young and boisterous and were doing just fine without us! "Yeah, we're just here to "have their backs," said one of us more experienced than the rest of us. As we went back to our car, we saw young national guardsmen leaning against their parked tanks. I said to them as we passed, intending to be inclusive and cautiousness—"Everybody is somebody's baby." They smiled. Isn't there a song like this? My heart and prayers went out to all of them.

The human condition. There's a standard joke of sorts, about somebody going to heaven and being given a tour by St. Peter. First thing the new comer notices is that no one has any clothes on! "And over there, is Abraham," said St. Peter. "How can you tell?" asked the newcomer. "He's surrounded by his descendants, too numerous to count!" "And there is Moses." "How can you tell?" asked the newcomer. "He's got a long beard and hangs on to those two stone tablets." "Of course!" "And over there in the corner is Adam and Eve." "How can you tell?" Well, how can you tell? The answer is, "They don't have any belly buttons."

The human condition. We are all somebody's baby. My father used to ask me if I belonged to "the belly button club." If I said "yes" then he would say, "Then show me your belly button." Yes, everybody is somebody's baby.

Today's Gospel Lesson can only be understood when we realize that Jesus is speaking to his disciples for the last time—and he knows it. Jesus, Mary's son, the young man who was raised in Nazareth, who was baptized in the Jordan and commissioned to lead God's people out of harm's way into a new kingdom of justice and peace—tells his followers that he is to lay down his life for them and that they are to love one another in the same way. His life and his actions reveal the presence of divine love. A gift already given. It is not that he gives his disciples something they don't already have—but draws out of them what God has already given.

*I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you,  
and that your joy may be complete.*

Jesus is God's gift to us. And we are God's gift to him. Here is what he says to them:

~ I love you with the same love that the Father loves me. You have what I have.

~ I give to you the joy that my Father and I share. You are part of us.

- ~ You are my joy, my life, and my purpose.
- ~ I want your joy to be full, complete, whole.
- ~ You are my friends.
- ~ I have told you everything.
- ~ I chose you. I wanted you.
- ~ Love one another. I trust and believe you can do this.

How we hear these words and what we do in our lives with these words changes how we understand the human condition—ourselves, one another, the world, and the circumstances of our lives. It's not that we can avoid the hurts and pains of living but our challenge is to claim access to divine love that is already ours that will sustain us and bring us joy.

Julian of Norwich, the great 14th century English mystic, wrote of her experiences of universal joy and the unlimited compassion of God. 700 years ago she wrote of God as both father and mother. Welsh composer, William Mathias wrote this anthem, using her words:

As truly God is our Father,  
So as truly is God our Mother.  
In our Father, God Almighty,  
We have our being;  
In our merciful Mother  
We are re-made and restored.  
Our fragmented lives are knit together;  
And by giving and yielding ourselves  
Through grace, to the holy spiirt  
We are made whole.

It is I, the strength and goodness of Fatherhood.

It is I, the wisdom of Motherhood.

It is I, the light and grace of holy love.

It is I, the Trinity, it is I, the unity.

I am the sovereign goodness in all things.

It is I who teach you to love.

It is I who teach you to desire.

It is I who am the reward of all true desiring.

All shall be well,

And all shall be well,

And all manner of thing shall be well.

It is also written of Julian of Norwich — if you want to understand what the Anglican faith has to offer to the rest of the Christian church—it is that the Anglican faith is shaped, not in the ancient centers of civilization—not in Rome or Constantinople—but it is Christianity brought to people in the outlying places where it was shaped by pragmatism and a trust in the goodness of creation. The British Isles were not the cultured places we think of today. They were the undeveloped and rugged frontiers. The sensibilities of the people who lived there, survived there, were shaped by life in the out-of-doors—in forests, mountains, lakes and rivers. They knew God as the creator of all, lover of all, present in all things—with us wherever we go. And they understood Jesus as the bearer and restorer of God’s loving compassion for them and all creation. Julian is best known for the wisdom she offered to the people of her day who suffered the hardships of plague and famine—of death and fear of death. When people came to her as asked for her guidance and wisdom, she held up a hazelnut and offered this assurance.

*Everything you need to know can be seen in this small hazelnut.  
God created it. God loves it. And God keeps it.*

May Mother Julian pass along to each of us the love and joy of God in all of creation, and especially in the gift of Jesus Christ, who offers us all, the unconditional love of a Mother for her children—*Everybody is somebody's baby*. May we find love and joy in each other. May we know deep in our souls that wherever we go and whatever our circumstances, we are loved and cherished and kept in the heart of God forever.

AMEN.