

**Julian of Norwich**  
May 8-9  
*Celebrate the church's first woman writer  
in the English language!*

**Why:** May 8, the church celebrates one of its most original voices: Julian of Norwich, the first woman to write a book in English and called the "greatest theologian of the English language" by Thomas Merton and Rowan Williams. Julian received a series of visions called "A Revelation of Love." Today, Julian is enthusiastically received into anthologies of women's spiritual writing and her theology remains breathtakingly relevant, although not completely understood. This year, May 8 falls on a Saturday making it a perfect opportunity to celebrate this unique figure in Christian history and theology.

**Sermon Ideas for Sunday, May 9, 2010**  
Revised Common Lectionary readings for Sunday, May 9.

New Testament: Revelation 21 envisioning the city of God.

**"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Julian of Norwich on the Holy City.**

"AND then our Lord opened my spiritual eye and showed me my soul in midst of my heart. I saw the Soul so large as if it were an endless world... And worshipfully He is seated in the Soul, in peace and rest. And the Godhead rules and sustains heaven and earth and all that is,—sovereign Might, sovereign Wisdom, and sovereign Goodness,—[but] the place that Jesus takes in *our Soul* He shall never remove it, without end, as to my sight: for in us is His *homeliest* home and His *endless dwelling*." *Julian of Norwich*- Chap 67

Gospel: John 14 Jesus says,

"Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

**"We will come to them and make our home in them." Julian of Norwich on the indwelling of God in humanity.**

"I saw that He is to us everything that is good and comfortable for us: He is our clothing that for love enwraps us, clasps us, and all encloses us for tender love, that He may never leave us; being to us all-thing that is good, as to my understanding."

*Julian of Norwich* Chapter 5

"For as the body is clad in the cloth, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in

the flesh, and the heart in the whole, so are we, soul and body, clad in the Goodness of God, and enclosed. Yea, and more homely: for all these may waste and wear away, but the Goodness of God is ever whole; and more near to us, without any likeness; for truly our Lover desires that our soul cleave to Him with all its might, and that we be evermore cleaving to His Goodness.”  
*Julian of Norwich* -Chapter 6

### Sunday School Ideas

1) Hold a Sunday school class session using one passage of Julian’s writing as a jumping off place for discussion. (See below for ideas.)

Give a brief summary of Julian’s life and work (background material below).  
Give the class a handout of a chapter from Julian’s book to study together.  
Recommended passages. Chapter 5, 54, 86

2) Using Brendan Doyle’s *Meditations with Julian of Norwich*, hold a prayer circle in which short passages of Julian’s work are read. Participants sit in silence for three minutes following each reading, and then open up conversation on what participants think the passage means or how it spoke to them.

### Important facts and background on Julian of Norwich:

- Julian was born in East Anglia in the city of Norwich in December of 1342.
- During her childhood and youth, East Anglia experienced two devastating plagues that killed nearly 80% of the population.
- In May of 1373, Julian received a series of visions that she later wrote down. She called these visions “A Revelation of Love.”
- Julian of Norwich was the first woman to write a book in English.
- Julian lived for many years as an “ anchoress,” a woman who committed herself to living in a small room attached to a parish church. For Julian, this church was St. Julian’s in Norwich.

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We also recommend Fr. John-Julian’s translation of Julian’s book found in *The Complete Julian of Norwich*(Paraclete).