

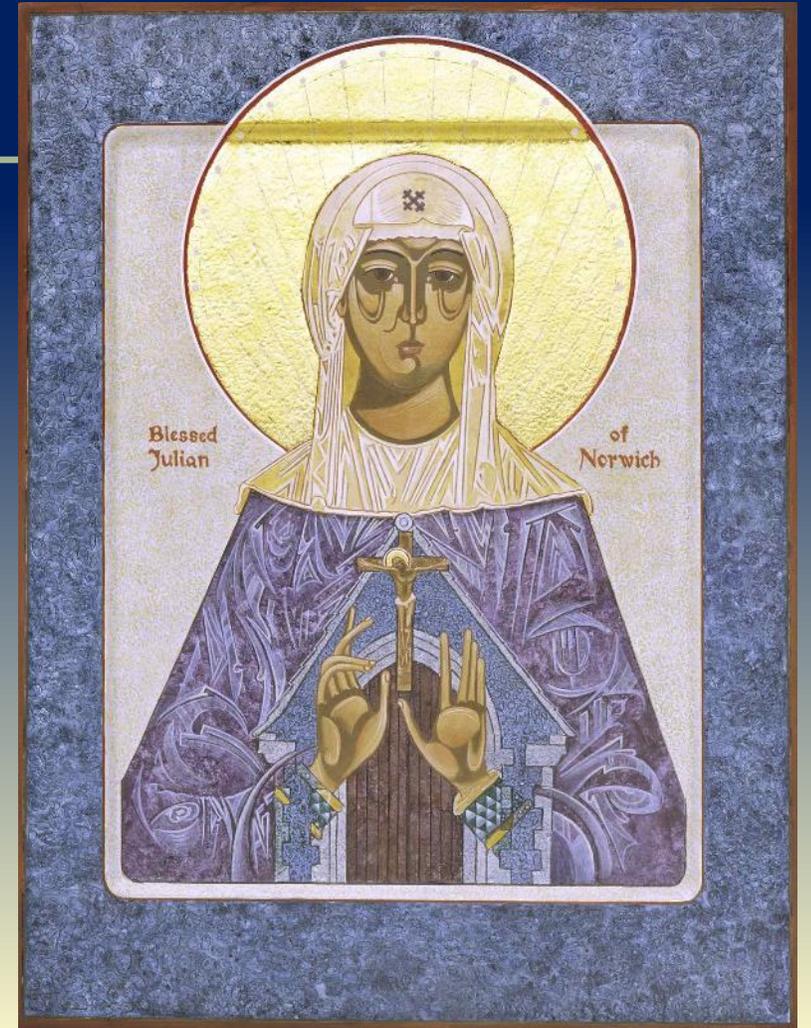
Medieval Women of the Church



Hildegard Von Bingen



Clare of Assisi



Julian of Norwich

HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

- Hildegard was a polymath who lived from 1098 – 1179 in what is now Germany
- Starting at age 3 she was a Christian mystic and visionary
- She was canonized in 2012 and named one of only 36 “doctors of the church”



HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

Hildegard was

- A philosopher
- Author and composer who wrote
 - nine books (theology, medicine, science, diet)
 - 70+ poems
 - 72 songs, one play (the oldest surviving “morality play”, a precursor to modern opera).
 - Composer of more surviving chants than any other medieval era composer.



HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

Hildegard was a

- Scientist – medicine (including gynecology and healing), natural history, botany
- Preacher - authorized by the Pope to preach in public
- Advisor to bishops, monks, nobles, mayors in extensive correspondence
- Creator of a new language
- Feminist – “Woman may be made from man, but no man can be made without a woman.”



From a letter written by Hildegard Von Bingen at age 77 about her visions:

“From my early childhood, before my bones, nerves, and veins were fully strengthened, I have always seen this vision in my soul, even to the present time when I am more than seventy years old.

In this vision my soul, as God would have it, rises up high into the vault of heaven and into the changing sky and spreads itself out among different peoples, although they are far away from me in distant lands and places.

And because I see them this way in my soul, I observe them in accord with the shifting of clouds and other created things. I do not hear them with my outward ears, nor do I perceive them by the thoughts of my own heart or by any combination of my five senses, but in my soul alone, while my outward eyes are open.

So I have never fallen prey to ecstasy in the visions, but I see them wide awake, day and night. And I am constantly fettered by sickness, and often in the grip of pain so intense that it threatens to kill me, but God has sustained me until now.

The light which I see thus is not spatial, but it is far, far brighter than a cloud which carries the sun. I can measure neither height, nor length, nor breadth in it; and I call it "the reflection of the living Light." And as the sun, the moon, and the stars appear in water, so writings, sermons, virtues, and certain human actions take form for me and gleam.”



CLARE OF ASSISI

- Clare was born Chiara Offreduccio on July 16, 1194 to Favarone Sciffi, Count of Sasso-Russo and his wife Ortolana.
- At the age of 18 she heard Francis of Assisi preach during Lent and determined to follow the way Francis preached.
- On Palm Sunday, March 20, 1212 Clare went to the chapel of Parziuncula to meet Francis and commit her life to God.
- Her hair was cut, she began wearing a plain robe and veil, and moved to the convent of Benedictine nuns of San Paolo near Bastia.
- A word about St. Francis from the Order of Friars Minor: Hearing a sermon on how Jesus' disciples were sent out "without silver or gold" Francis decided to devote himself totally to living poorly, like the apostles. He dressed in a rough garment, went barefoot and with "no bag for the journey, nor a staff", he began to preach repentance.



CLARE OF ASSISI

- Her father and uncles attempted to force her to return home, presumably because her father had plans to marry her to someone from another wealthy or powerful family, She resisted and proclaimed she would have no other husband but Jesus.
- Soon after Clare's sister Catarina (who took the name Agnes) joined her and they moved to a dwelling Francis provided by the Church of San Damiano. Her mother and other sisters would also join her order which became known as the Order of Poor Ladies of San Damiano with Francis initially continuing to serve as their leader. Following her death the order would be renamed the Order of St Clare and is referred to as the Poor Clares.
- In 1216 Clare accepted the role of abbess of the order. Despite suffering lifelong illness and pain, Clare was renowned in the region for her work caring for the sick and her generosity to those in need.
- The sisters in the order lived a life of prayer, labor, poverty, austerity, and seclusion; owning no property; never wearing shoes, abstaining from meat, living in cloisters, and spending most of their lives in silence. They survived on contributions given to the order.



CLARE OF ASSISI

- In 1141 Clare is stopped the soldiers of Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, who were attacking Assisi and trying to enter the convent.
- She went to the entrance of the convent to meet the soldiers holding the Blessed Sacrament and placed it on the wall where the soldiers could see it.
- She prayed to God to save the Sisters saying, “Does it please you, O God, to deliver into the hands of these beasts the defenseless children I have nourished with your love? I beseech you, dear Lord, protect these whom I am now unable to protect.” To her sisters she said, “Don’t be afraid. Trust in Jesus.” A voice seemed to answer: "I will keep them always in My care. The soldiers fled in fear.



CLARE OF ASSISI

- Throughout her life as Abbess, the leaders of church pressured Clare and the sisters to give up the life of poverty they followed. In 1219 Cardinal Ugolino, future Pope Gregory IX, drew up a new rule for the order based on the rule of Benedict that allowed for holding property in common. Pope Honorius II issued a bull approving it. Clare and the sisters refused to give up the order's rule of poverty.
- In 1228 Gregory IX finally agreed to allow the order to continue their commitment to living in poverty issuing Privilegium Paupertatis.
Since, therefore, you have asked for it, we confirm by Apostolic favor your resolution of the loftiest poverty and by the authority of these present letters grant that you may not be constrained by anyone to receive possessions.
- Two days before Clare's death Pope Innocent IV final issued a papal bull *Solet annuere* that confirmed that Clare's rule would be the rule for her order.
- Clare died on August 11, 1253. The pope and his court came to Assisi for her funeral.
- In 1255 Clare was canonized by Pope Alexander IV.



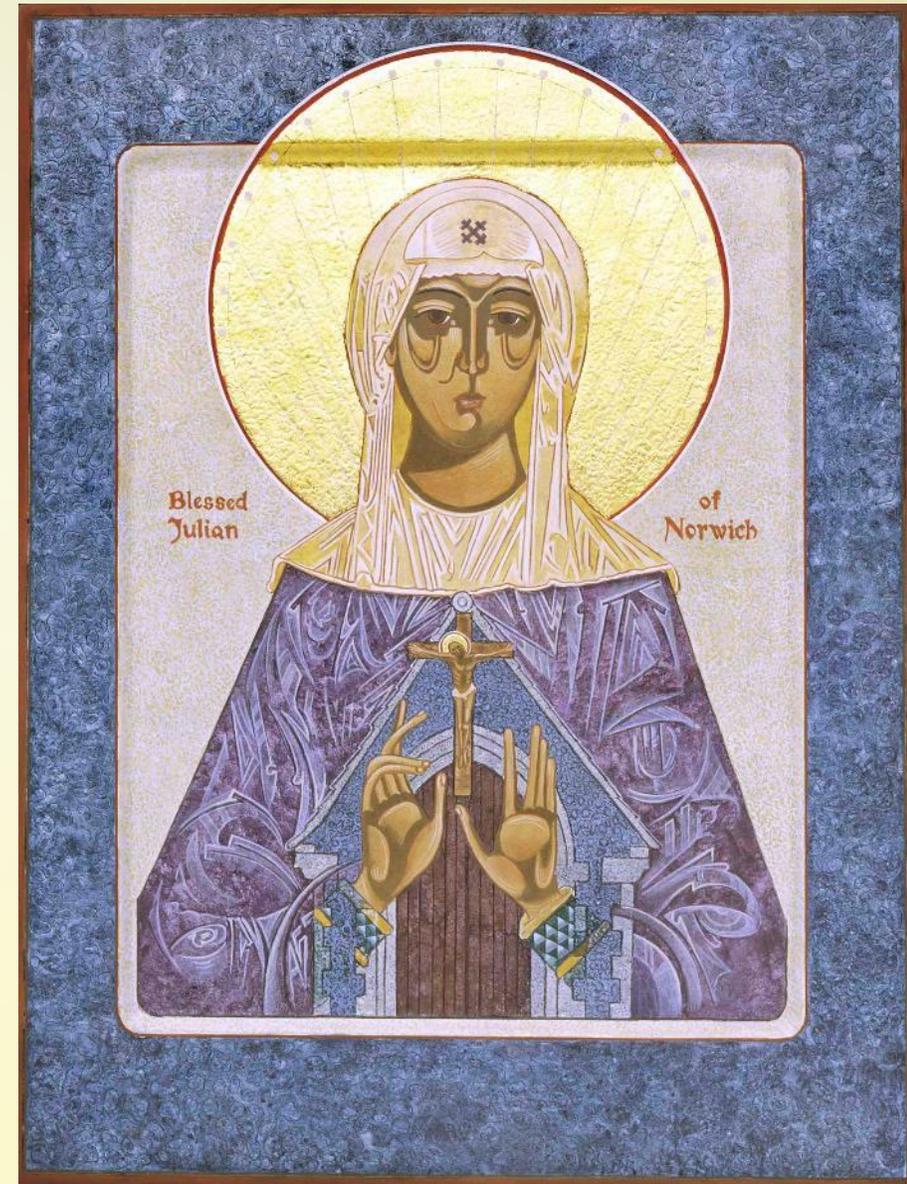
JULIAN OF NORWICH

- Julian of Norwich is considered one of the greatest English mystics and theologians.
- Little is known of Julian of Norwich's life before 1373 including her name. She is referred to as Julian of Norwich because she spent many years living as an anchoress at the Church of St. Julian in Norwich, England.
- There is some belief that she may have been married and had children but had lost both her husband and children during one of the outbreaks of the Black Death (plague) that happened in 1348-49, 1361-62, and 1369 which resulted in over 70 percent of the population of Norwich dying.



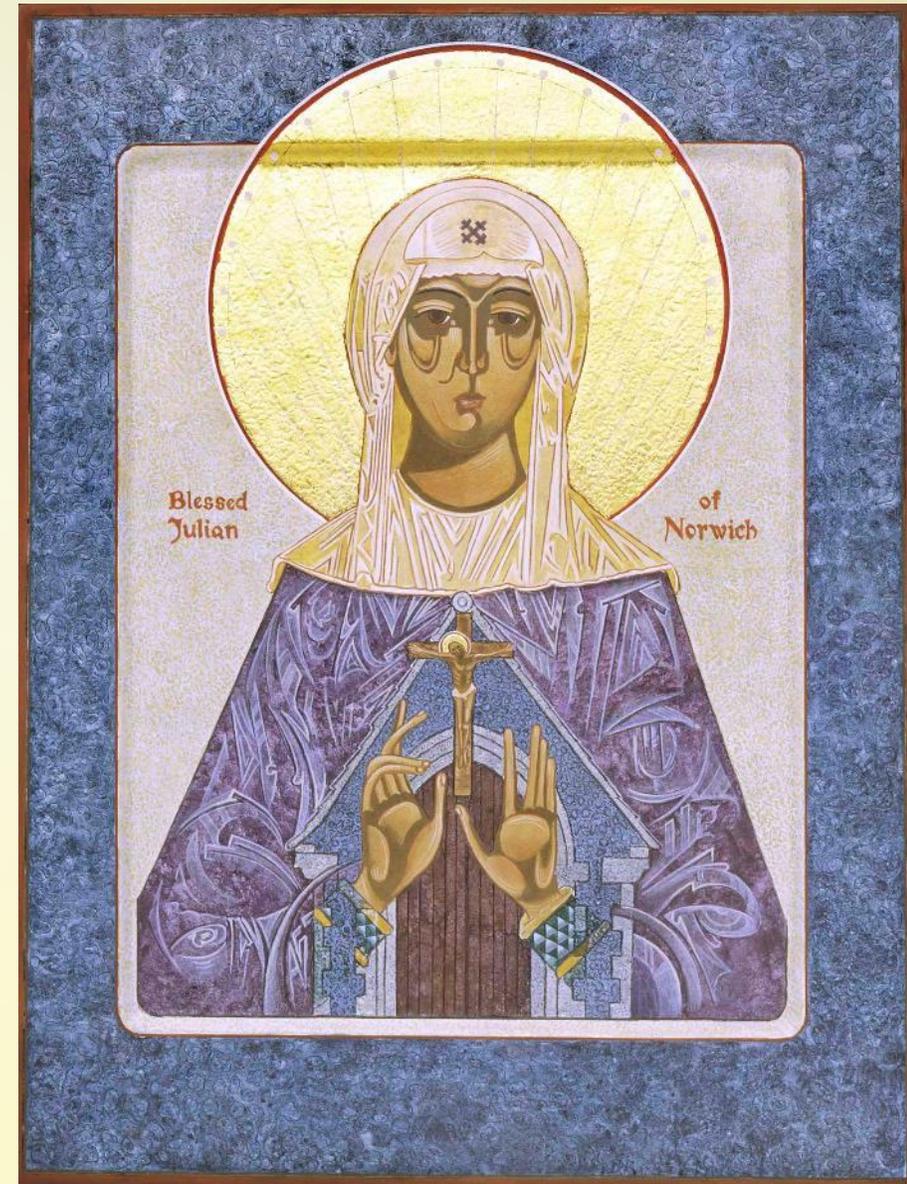
JULIAN OF NORWICH

- Julian was living in a cell at the Church of St. Julian by the 1390s as an anchoress; someone who withdraws from secular society to lead an intensely prayer-oriented, ascetic, or Eucharist-focused life.
- To become an anchoress Julian would have gone through a discernment process and been selected to lead the life of an anchoress. Once selected for this role, a service with a bishop present where psalms for the dead would have been said as if she had died.
- After which she would have gone to her cell where she would remain for her lifetime following a strict set of rules.



JULIAN OF NORWICH

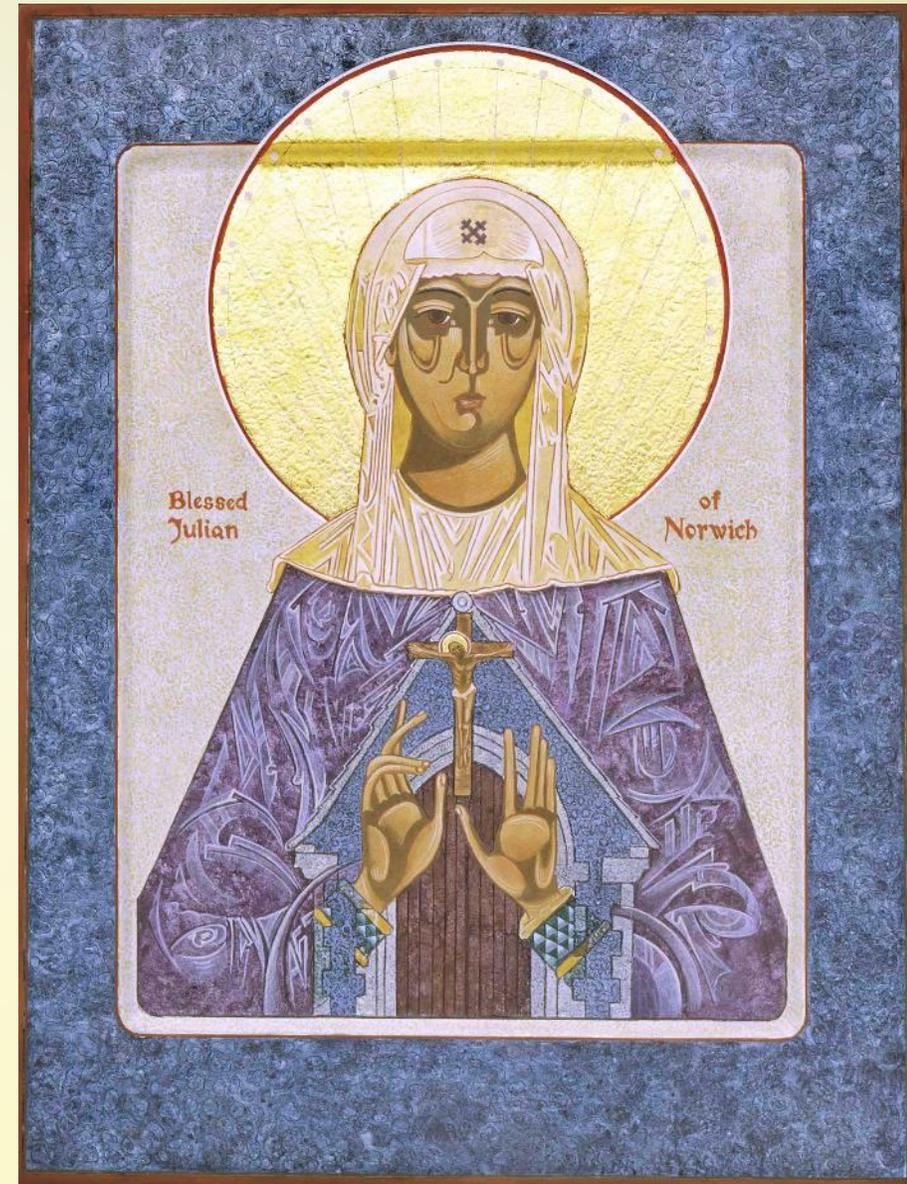
- Although Julian lived the remainder of her life in her cell, she wasn't isolated.
- People came to visit her for prayers and advice as well as to offer financial support.
- She had a companion, Sarah, who lived in a room near her and helped with her needs.
- It is believed Julian lived until at least 1416 when she was named in a will and possibly as late as 1429 when she was named in another will.



JULIAN OF NORWICH

REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE

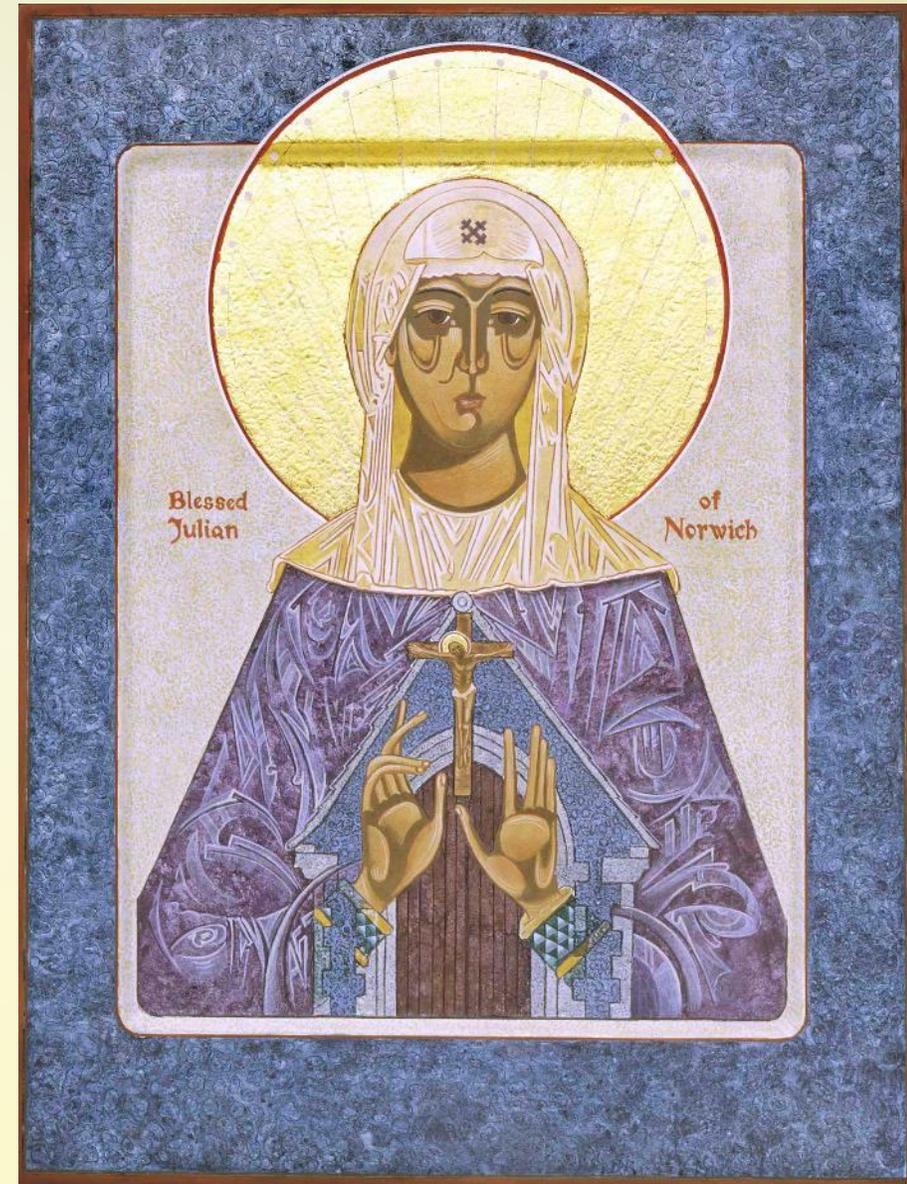
- Julian became deathly ill with fever, labored breathing, and a sense of being paralyzed when she was 30 years old. While ill Julian had 16 visions of Christ on May 8, 1373.
- She would write about these visions and what Christ told her in the *Revelations of Divine Love*.
- The first version of *Revelations of Divine Love*, called the short text, was written shortly after her visions. The second version, called the long text, was written two decades later and included her meditations on what she had seen in her visions.
- There are only fragments of 15th century texts and 17th century copies of earlier versions of the long text.
- Julian's visions seemed to contradict and criticize the actions of the medieval clergy, if not Church teaching itself (especially regarding women). It took Julian years of prayer and meditation to reconcile the differences between church teachings and what had been revealed in her visions.



JULIAN OF NORWICH

REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE

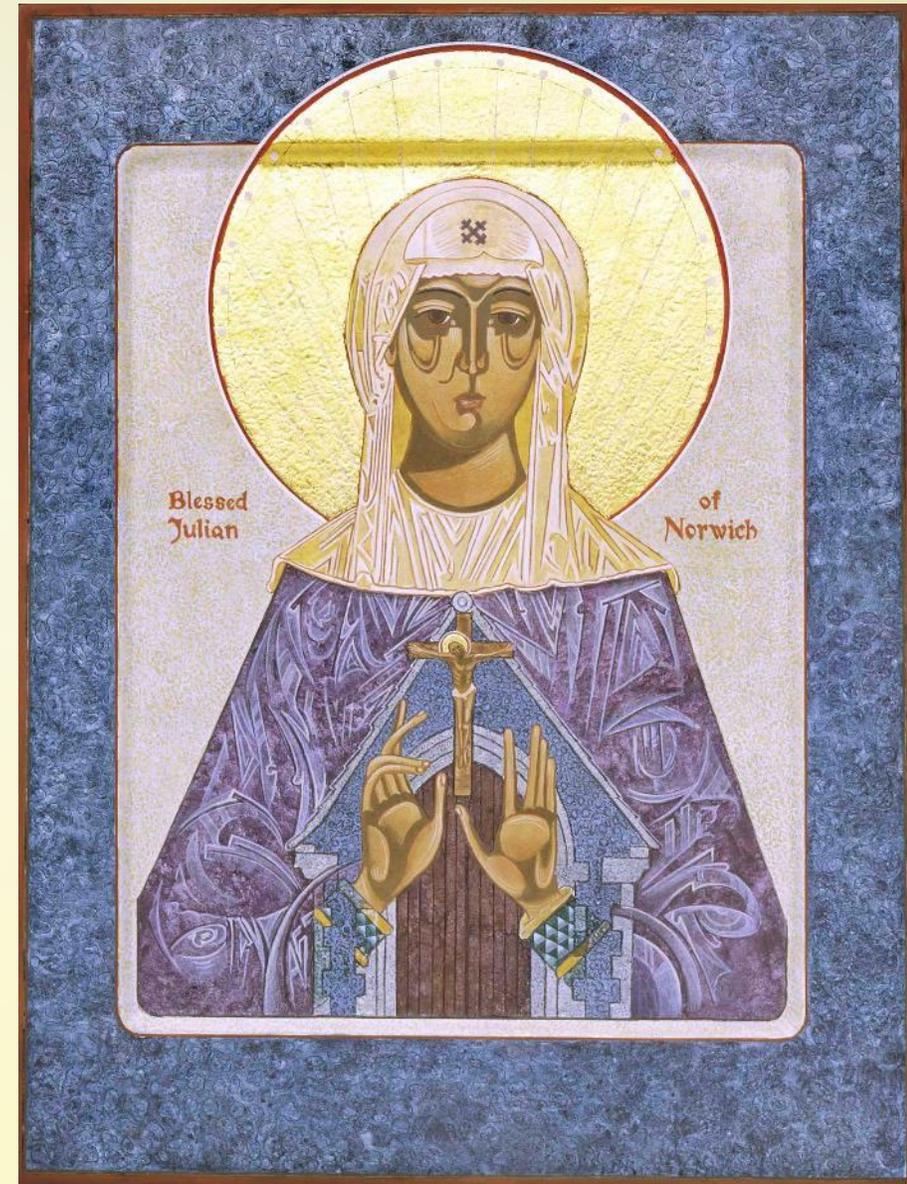
- The Greatest honor we can give almighty God is to live gladly because of the knowledge of his love.
- God loved us before he made us; And his love has never diminished and never shall.
- The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything.
- For we are so preciously loved by God that we cannot even comprehend it. No creative being can ever know how much and how sweetly and tenderly God loves them. This only with the help of his grace that we are able to persevere in spiritual contemplation with endless wonder at his high, surpassing, immeasurable love which our Lord in his goodness has for us.



JULIAN OF NORWICH

REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE

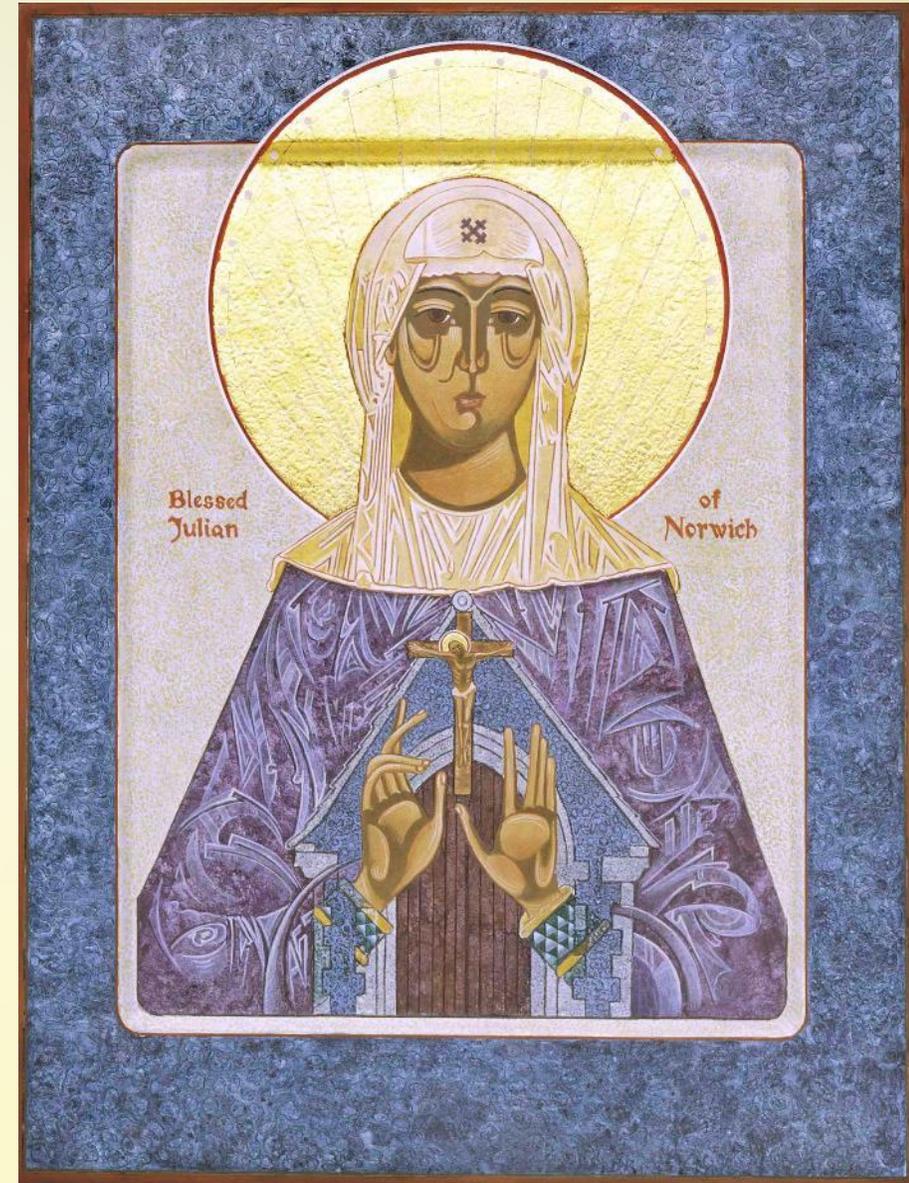
- Pray, even if you feel nothing, see nothing. For when you are dry, empty, thick, or weak, at such a time as your prayer most pleasing to God, even though you may find little joy in it. This is true of all believing prayer.
- As truly as God is our father, so truly God is our mother.
- Our Lord is the ground from whom our prayer grows and, in his love, and grace he himself gives us our prayers.
- The fullness of joy is behold God in everything. God is the ground, the substance, the teaching, the teacher, the purpose, and the reward for which every soul labors.



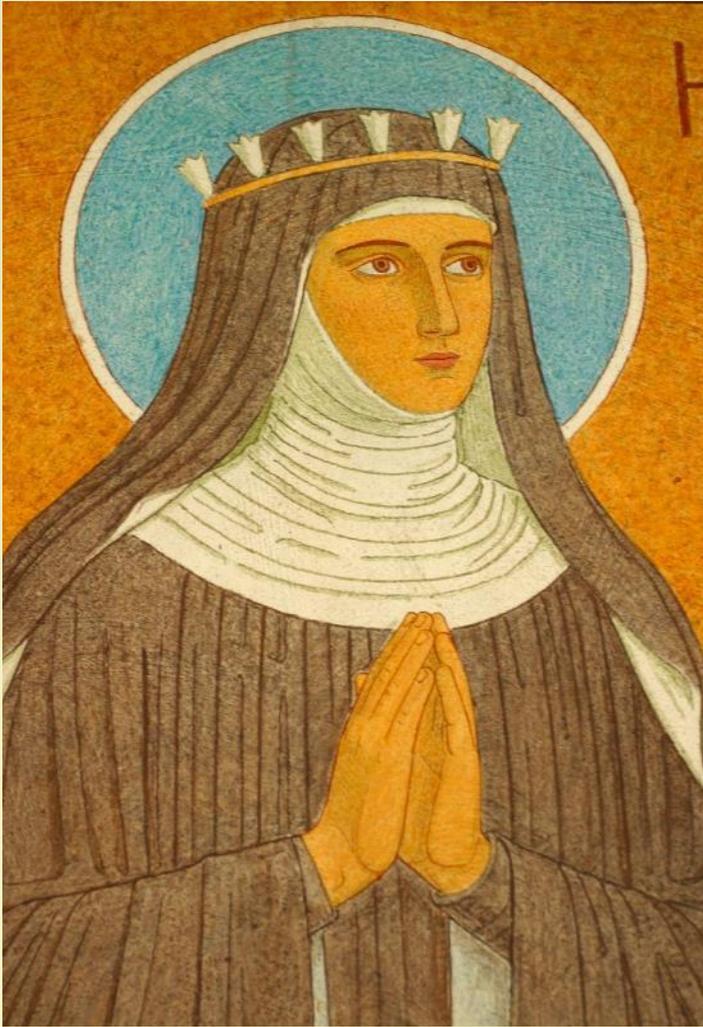
JULIAN OF NORWICH

REVELATIONS OF DIVINE LOVE

- Julian is best known for the quote where Jesus said to her “All will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of things will be well.”
- In this vision Jesus comforts her telling her that sin is necessary but that “all will be well, and all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well.” She internalizes Jesus' words and concludes that, because of God's love freely given to all, “it is true that sin is the cause of all this pain but all will be well and every kind of thing will be well.”



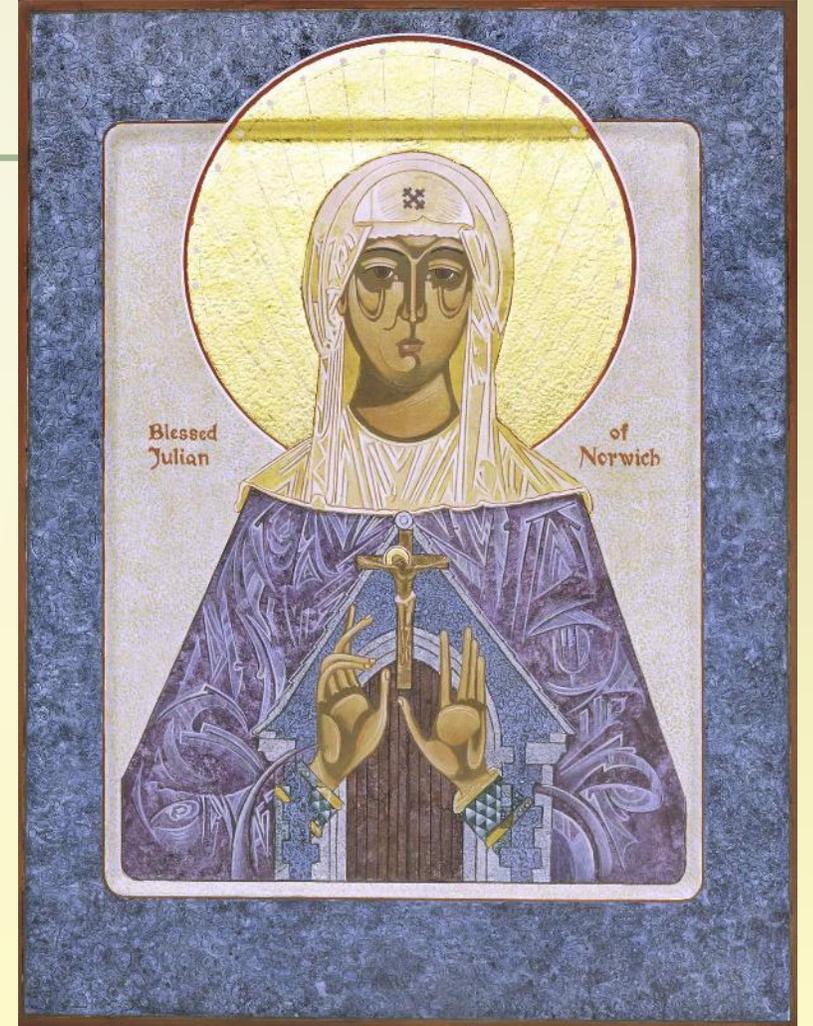
Medieval Women of the Church



Hildegard Von Bingen



Clare of Assisi



Julian of Norwich