



Blessed Be

December 2021

Welcome to this edition of Blessed Be. May your Christmas be blessed, peaceful and safe!

At this time of the year when our focus is on the birth of Jesus, motherhood is highlighted. Margery Kempe (1373-1439) was an unusual mother.

After the birth of her first child, she became violent and self-destructive to the point where she was tied down. One night Jesus appeared to her, asking why she had forsaken him when he hadn't forsaken her. At which point she experienced a feeling of peace and she returned to normal.

This was the beginning of her spiritual journey. She was not always taken seriously, was often derided and was tried for heresy several times. She was known as the Madwoman of God. She was also illiterate and dependent on others for her spiritual study. (When she came to write her autobiography, the first by a woman in English, she dictated it to an obliging priest).

After the birth of her 14th child, she persuaded her husband that their spiritual lives would be enhanced by celibacy. She then embarked on a series of pilgrimages across England and Europe.

*Here are some quotes from the **Book of Margery Kempe**, her autobiography which was written in the third person:*

On a night, as this creature lay in her bed with her husband, she heard a sound of melody so sweet and delectable, that she thought she was in Paradise, and therewith she started out of her bed and said, "Alas that I ever did sin! It is full merry in Heaven".

She many times met men of the district who said to her, "Woman, give up this life that you lead and go and spin, and card wool, as other women do, and do not suffer so much shame and unhappiness. We would not suffer so much for any money on Earth."

Then she said to them, "I do not suffer as much sorrow as I would do for our Lord's love, for I only suffer cutting words, and our merciful Lord Christ Jesus ...suffered hard strokes, bitter scour gings, and shameful death at last, for me and all mankind, blessed may he be."

Then the lady's priest came to her, saying, "Woman, Jesus is long since dead." When her crying ceased, she said to the priest, "His death is as fresh to me as if he had died this same day, and so, I think, it ought to be to you and to all Christian people."

Then many people were amazed at her, asking what was wrong with her; to which she, like a creature all wounded with love, and in whom reason had failed, cried in a loud voice: "The Passion of Christ slays me."

Sometimes she wept very abundantly and violently out of desire for the bliss of heaven, and because she was being kept from it for so long.

Patience is more worthy than miracle-working.

We have all heard of the Desert Fathers of early Christianity. Not so well-known but very much present and revered were the Desert Mothers. We have today sayings from three of them:

Ammas Theodora:

If you think upon that which is good, you will be disposed to it. Human thought is never hidden from God. For this reason, your thoughts must always be clean of all evil.

Staying awake to meditate cleanses the mind, fasting humbles the body, Prayer unites us to God

This present age is a storm, and it is only through many trials and temptations that we can obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven

It is good to live in peace, for the wise man practises perpetual prayer. It is truly a great thing for a virgin or a monk to live in peace, especially for the younger ones. However, you should realize that as soon as you intend to live in peace, at once evil comes and weighs down your soul through lethargy, faintheartedness, and evil thoughts. It also attacks your body through sickness, debility, weakening of the knees and all the members. It dissipates the strength of soul and body, so that one believes one is ill and no longer able to pray. But if we are vigilant, all these temptations fall away.

Ammas Sarah:

If I prayed God that all people should approve of my conduct, I should find myself a penitent at the door of each one, but I shall rather pray that my heart may be pure towards all.

Sarah was asked, “So much evil in the world – I am assaulted by every injustice I witness – what shall I do?” She replied, “Do not try to battle all of them. Fight against the chief one and all the others will perish. For this, my child, is your spiritual combat: the power of stillness, fasting, tears from the heart, and a multitude of prostrations and humble offerings in your prayer.”

Ammas Syncletica:

In the beginning there are a great many battles and a good deal of suffering for those who are advancing towards God and afterwards, ineffable joy. It is like those who wish to light a fire; at first, they are choked by the smoke and cry, and by this means obtain what they seek. As it is said, Our God is a consuming fire so we must also kindle the divine fire in ourselves through tears and hard work.

There are many who live in the mountains and behave as if they were in the town; they are wasting their time. It is possible to be solitary in one’s mind while living in a crowd; and it is possible for those who are solitaries to live in the crowd of their own thoughts.

Just as the most bitter medicine drives out poisonous creatures so prayer and fasting drive, evil thoughts away.

Let me tell you how to love all equally...Do not demand anything from those you love. If you make demands, some will give you more and some less. In any case you will love more those who give you more and less those who give you less. Thus, your love will not be the same for all. You will not be able to love all impartially. ***Sarada Devi***

As you smell the fragrance of a flower by handling it or the smell of sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, so you obtain spiritual awakening by constantly thinking of God. ***Sarada Devi***

Rabindrath Tagore, Gitanjali, 1913 (Thanks Alison)

Time is Endless

Time is endless in thy hands my Lord. There is none to count thy minutes.

Days and nights pass and ages bloom and fade like flowers. Thou knowest how to wait.

Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small white flower.

We have no time to lose and, having no time, we must scramble for our chances. We are too poor to be late.

And thus it is that time goes by while I give it to every querulous (person) who claims it and thine altar is empty of all offerings until the last.

At the end of the day I hasten in fear lest thy gate be shut; but I find that yet there is time.

Some poetry by Rumi

I see so deeply within myself.

I see so deeply within myself.
Not needing my eyes, I can see everything clearly.
Why would I want to bother my eyes again
Now that I see the world through His eyes?

All through eternity

All through eternity
Beauty unveils His exquisite form
in the solitude of nothingness;
He holds a mirror to His Face
and beholds His own beauty.
he is the knower and the known,
the seer and the seen;
No eye but His own
has ever looked upon this Universe.

His every quality finds an expression:
Eternity becomes the verdant field of Time and Space;
Love, the life-giving garden of this world.
Every branch and leaf and fruit
Reveals an aspect of His perfection-
The cypress gives hint of His majesty,
The rose gives tidings of His beau

Whenever Beauty looks

Whenever Beauty looks,
Love is also there;
Whenever beauty shows a rosy cheek
Love lights Her fire from that flame.
When beauty dwells in the dark folds of night
Love comes and finds a heart
entangled in tresses.
Beauty and Love are as body and soul.
Beauty is the mine, Love is the diamond.
They have been together
since the beginning of time-
Side by side, step by step.

Here is John Donne's 'Holy Sonnet XIV'. I wonder how many of you remember it?

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

From the Buddha

“Whatever living beings there may be — feeble or strong, long, stout, or of medium size, short, small, large, those seen or those unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born as well as those yet to be born — may all beings have happy minds.”

“Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Suffering follows an evil thought as the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that draw it. Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Joy follows a pure thought like a shadow that never leaves.”

Conquer anger through gentleness, unkindness through kindness, greed through generosity, and falsehood by truth.”

Spirit and energy should be clear as the night air;
In the soundless is the ultimate pleasure all along. *Sun-Bu'er*

