



*Detail from Crucifixion by Bernardo Daddi*

# HOLY SATURDAY

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Art from the National Gallery

Reflections from Julian of Norwich



# INTRODUCTION

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## HOW TO VIEW ART

The first step to viewing and enjoying art is simply to relax and slow down. Seeing takes time. Take a few deep breaths. Begin by gazing at the entire picture, taking it all in at once. Next, notice the shapes, lines, and colors. Notice the lighting. Notice the details of both the foreground and background. As you gaze at the artwork, does anything draw your attention? If so, spend a bit of time focusing on that part of the image, asking God if there is anything he would like to show you. If not, simply spend a few more moments taking in the picture as a whole. Thank God for this artists' work. Then read the reflections from Julian, gaze once more, and move on.

## ABOUT JULIAN OF NORWICH

“Julian of Norwich (1342 - ca. 1416) was an English recluse who recounted the poignant, subtle, and radical insights granted to her in sixteen visions of the crucified Christ as she lay on what was believed to be her deathbed. Her miraculous recovery from that illness led to twenty more years of reflection and contemplation and finally to her writing this detailed account of her mystical experience.”

The account ends in this way:

“Here end the sublime and wonderful Revelations  
of the unutterable love of God in Jesus Christ,  
vouchsafed to a dear lover of His and in  
her to all His dear friends and  
lovers, whose hearts, like  
hers, do flame in the  
love of our  
dearest  
Jesus.”

These pairings of sacred art and select passages from Dame Julian's writings are provided as prompts for your own reflections on Holy Saturday.<sup>1</sup>

National Gallery of Art  
West Building  
Main Floor

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REFLECTION ONE

**Gallery 01**

*Crucifixion*

Attributed to Bernardo Daddi

And I, gazing upon all this by His grace, saw that the love in Him that He has for our soul was so strong that willingly He chose the Passion with great desire, and humbly He suffered it with great joy, with great satisfaction.

The soul that sees it in this way, when it is touched by grace, shall truly see that the pains of Christ's Passion surpass all pains – that is to say, those pains that shall be changed into everlasting surpassing joys by the power of Christ's Passion.

REFLECTION TWO

**Gallery 08**

Passion of Our Lord Series: *The Agony in the Garden*, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, *The Crucifixion*, *Christ in Limbo*, *The Resurrection*

Benvenuto di Giovanni

And here I saw with respect to the second vision in this blessed Passion that the love that made Him suffer surpassed all His pains as far as Heaven is above earth;

for the pain was a noble, honorable deed done at one time by the action of love; but the love was without beginning, is now, and shall be without ending.

## REFLECTION THREE

### **Gallery 08**

#### *Crucifixion*

Sano di Pietro

Then with a glad expression, our Lord looked into His wounded side and gazed with joy,  
and with His sweet gazing He directed the understanding of His creature [Julian] through that same wound into His side within.

There He showed a fair, desirable place, and large enough for all mankind that shall be saved to rest in peace and love.  
And with that he brought to mind His dearworthy blood and precious water which He allowed to pour all out for love.

## REFLECTION FOUR

### **Gallery 22**

#### *Pietà*

Moretto Da Brescia

Here I saw a part of the compassion of Our Lady Saint Mary,  
for Christ and she were so one-ed in love  
that the magnitude of her love caused the magnitude of her pain...

... And all His disciples and all His true lovers suffered more pains than  
their own bodily dying,  
for I am certain, by my own experience,  
that the least of them loved Him so far above himself that it surpasses all I  
can say.

Here I saw a great one-ing between Christ and us, as I understood it, for  
when He was in pain, we were in pain.

## REFLECTION FIVE

### **Gallery 35A**

*The Ascension*

Johan Koebecke

And because of the tender love that our good Lord has to all that shall be saved, he comforts quickly and sweetly, meaning thus:  
“It is true that sin is the cause of all this pain,  
but all shall be well,  
and all shall be well,  
and all manner of thing shall be well.”

## REFLECTION SIX

### **Gallery 47**

*Daniel in the Lions' Den*

Sir Peter Paul Rubens

Another understanding is this: that, from our point of view, there are many deeds evilly done and such great harm given that it seems to us that it would be impossible that ever it should come to a good end; and we look upon this, sorrowing and mourning because of it, so that we cannot take our ease in the joyful beholding of God as we would like to do...

...and this is what He means when He says,  
“Thou shalt see for thyself that all manner of thing shall be well,”  
as if He said,  
“Pay attention to this now, faithfully and trustingly, and at the last end thou shalt see it in fullness of joy.”

## REFLECTION SEVEN

### Gallery 48

#### *The Descent from the Cross*

Rembrandt Workshop (probably Constantijn van Renesse)

[It] is understood that He could never rise omnipotently from the time that He was fallen into the Maiden's womb until His body was slain and dead, He yielding His soul into the Father's hands along with all mankind for whom He was sent.

And at this point of rising He began first to show His power, for He went into hell, and when He was there He raised up out of the deep darkness the Great Root of Jesse which properly was knit to Him in high heaven.

The body was in the grave until Easter morning, and from that time on He lay down never more.

After completing the seven reflections in the West Gallery, we recommend ending your time in the East Gallery with Barnett Newman's Stations of the Cross / Lema Sabachthani (East Building Tower, Gallery 615B).

*Thank you to Leigh McAfee for curating the art and reflections for this guide!*

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<sup>1</sup> Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, Contemporary English Edition. Introduced, translated, and ordered for daily devotional use by Fr. John-Julian, OJN. Paraclete Press: Brewster, MA, 2001. All excerpts that follow are from this edition and found on pages 52, 56, 59, 47, 65, 73, and 133, respectively.