

# Becoming a human being

*I was born a man (woman), but now my task is to become a human being*  
Rabbi Abraham Heschel

*I do not want to be myself only; I want the other to be part of who I am and I want to be part of the other.*  
Miroslav Volf

1968 saw the first photograph of planet Earth- our home- a “bright, blue and white Christmas tree ornament and the black sky, that infinite universe”. An astronaut saw the earth “so small and so fragile and such a precious little spot on the universe that you can block it out with your thumb”. And this little spot contains “everything that means anything to you- all of history and music and poetry and art and death and birth and love and tears and joy....”

And this reminds us Julian’s astonishing vision of the hazelnut in the palm of her hand, so small, that “I marveled that it could be, for I thought it might have crumbled”. But it was her conviction, that this tiny nut, so small yet the ground of all humanity, was held together because it was created by love, and that love was its meaning.

**Imagine a hazelnut in the palm of your hand - look at it, feel it, let it speak to you of its littleness and fragility.**

**Let it also speak to you of your littleness and fragility, of your life and potential and interconnectedness with everything that is.**

**Let yourself be looked at by God- and marvel that all things are held together and created by love- and that love is your meaning.**

As you imagine the hazelnut in the palm of your hand, call to mind the image of this planet Earth, our home. It speaks to us of a common humanity, without the boundaries of tribe or nation, ethnicity or colour or gender. “We were all once one”. (Paul VI) Let this image nurture you as you pray for your sisters and brothers, and for the whole community of creation.

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Julian of Norwich (1342?-1420) is the most popular of the English mystics. As an anchoress she lived in a cell attached to a Norwich church and engaged in prayer and spiritual guidance. In the face of intense suffering she could joyfully exclaim: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well".

*And in this he showed me something small: no bigger than a hazelnut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed to me, and it was as round as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: What can this be? I was amazed that it could last, for I thought that because of its littleness it would suddenly have fallen into nothing. And I was answered in my understanding: it lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God.*

Julian of Norwich, **Revelations of Divine Love 5**

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