

## AUDIO RETREAT

### Advent Audio Retreat 2023 | Week One | “When Things Fall Apart”

## Prayer and reflection resource

*O that you would tear open the heavens and come down...*

*We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no-one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.*

*Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are the potter; we are all the work of your hands.*

Isaiah 64.1,6-8

### From the audio:

I have come to see that what is taking place in our world is the result of absence: the absence of respect and reverence for the other; the absence of compassion; the absence of justice and inclusion; the absence of the lived recognition of our interdependence with one another and with all that is created. It is through the absence of what should be there that things fall apart – the bones need their sinews, the bricks their mortar, the leaf light and warmth.

Julian of Norwich saw human sin as nothing – that is ‘no-thing’: the denial of being; the absence of what connects us creatively and compassionately in patterns of shared flourishing. Sin is serious because it is ‘no – thing’; all falls apart in the lack of what should be there. No compassion, no honouring of the other, no justice. The leaf fades and the wind takes it away.

*O wretched sin, what are you? You are nothing. For I saw that God is in everything; I did not see you. And when I saw that God has made everything, I did not see you. And when I saw that God does everything...I did not see you. And when I saw our Lord Jesus Christ seated in our soul so honourably, and love and delight and rule and guard all that he has made, I did not see you. And so I am certain that you are nothing.*

Julian of Norwich, Short Text, chapter 23 in Showings, Classics of Western Spirituality, Paulist Press 1979

**From the audio:**

'O that you would tear the heavens open and come down'.

And come down you did – in a moment of time and place – in the vulnerability of a naked Judean child and in the full grown, naked man whose arms were stretched on a cross. And come down you do, in and beyond time and place, for this time and this place. And if those arms could not hold together what the absence of love and life tore apart, yet in your dying, lying in the tomb and rising there was, and is, presence.

In the face of absence, you are presence.

The Advent season is the dark womb of this presence.



*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. [Genesis 1.1-2]*

Advent draws us into a stance with which we can face into life and face into God:

- Owning how things are, and resting this reality in God
- Being attentive: not only to the void but the stirring of the breath of God moving over the waters
- Waiting: letting go our anxious activity and opening ourselves to what comes by gift
- Stepping through the door of hope: Just as God is always stepping through the door of hope to this time and this place, we step through this door by allowing God's presence in us to be formed, and then move out through us into the darkness and void.

## Winter Walks

As autumn moves into winter the landscape and skyscape changes day by day. Leaves colour and fall; the strong, delicate structures of trees and their branches are revealed; the skies become open and wide. As you walk, you may find landscape and skyscape begin to be in dialogue with your 'soulcape'; something deep stirs within you, revealing the shape of your own longing.

This is the season also of long and dark nights. Go out to as dark a place as you can find. Look up at the immensity of stars; notice their different colours and brightness. Savour the stillness and mystery. Like the Magi, you may find the beginning of a journey here.