

My Soul's Desire

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My heart was filled with delight and celebration recently at the beauty of the oneness of all creation when I went to the exhibition of the *Lady and the Unicorn Tapestries*, (c. 1500), in the *Art Gallery of New South Wales*. Just outside the exhibition, a colourful canopy of millefleur patterned fabric graced the corridor and drew me to cross a threshold into sacred time and space. While literally, I had walked into a darkened room lined with enormous French tapestries finely woven from wool and silk, symbolically, I felt I had entered into the sensual garden of the *Song of Songs*. The room was filled with people in awe, being invited into a sensuous soul-seeing. The glow of the autumn red of the tapestries bathed my senses in wonder, as my heart awakened to gaze, to behold, to feel a timeless yearning. The poet Rilke's words, calligraphed on the gallery wall, caught my attention: "there are six

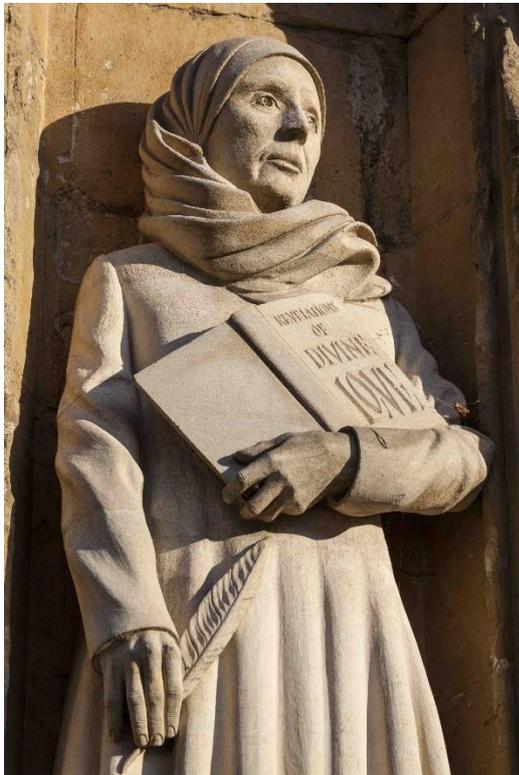
tapestries; come let us pass slowly in front of them. But first of all take a step back and look at them all together. Are they not tranquil?" (from *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, 1910).

Rilke's invitational question, "Are they not tranquil?" resounded in the tranquil centre of my heart and invited me into a soulful being. The glowing red beauty kept drawing me to enter into the world of dancing flowers and playful animals at one with a beautiful, serene woman who was accompanied by a lion and a unicorn. Enchanted, I continued to gaze at each tapestry as they each delighted my sense of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. Finally, my attention rested on a colourful aqua and gold canopy adorned with the words "*Mon seul desi - My soul's desire.*" Identified as a "sixth" sense, this soul-desire reached into and touched my own soul's desire. The tapestries reminded me of how, within the *Contemplative Evolution Network*, we awaken our soul's desire when we meet each afternoon consciously within the heart of God, follow the stirrings of the divine desire, and commune with God in creation.

Though there are many interpretations of the iconography of the tapestries, for me, the graceful woman was the personification of divine desire expressed in authentic human nature. The gentle unicorn, evoking the single horned goat of Danial 8:5, symbolized the presence of the Christ. The lion, as in traditional medieval iconography, exemplified strength, fidelity and vigilance. Immersed in all this beauty, my senses ignited, attuning me into the sacredness of sensual knowing in present moment awareness. With my bodily senses filled to overflowing, they became portals into seeing how the tapestries also celebrate the spiritual, or mystical senses of our soul. These inner, sensual, heart ways of knowing infuse soul wisdom that naturally flows from the transcendence



within us. They awaken the inner landscape of our hearts, infuse body and spirit, negate all distinctions between inner and outer sensual awareness, and carry us beyond sensual knowing into silence. These soul sensitive touchings express our intimacy with God. The words of Julian of Norwich resounded: "And I saw how God is in our sensuality." (Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, Revelation 14, Chapter 55). Our sensuality is holy.



Just a few decades before the making of these beautiful French tapestries, only across the channel in England, Julian describes her soul's desire as a wound of love that incited an unquenchable longing to be one with her God. Drawn by her insatiable yearning to be all oned in God, she describes her experiences of the soul-sensations of enlightened love in her *Revelations of Divine Love*. Like the iconography of the tapestries inviting us to enjoy our sensual awareness, Julian encourages us to be soulful. As we meet each afternoon in prayer in the contemplative evolution network, she inspires us to: "behold God and enjoy God with an overwhelming desire to be all oned into God, entering God's dwelling, attending to the wooing, enjoying the loving, and delighting in the goodness." (*Revelations*, 14.43). Is this not our soul's desire, as we gather? We desire to intentionally dwell within our God, attend to God's

wooing, enjoy and delight in the goodness of God in creation and hold all that is vulnerable in our world within this ground of outpouring love.

The radiant colours of the tapestries and Julian's affirming of our sensual knowing blessed my senses and opened a heightened sensitivity, not only to my own soul's desire, but to *our* soul's desire. This communal desire flows when we attune to and centre in the divine desire, connect with others centered in this desire, and awaken from within our oneness in the one divine desire. One in the divine heart, in the spaciousness of contemplative time, a new level of communal awareness evolves. We choose to be a womb of compassion. We ache to love the world deeply. We seek to be a safe-haven for human fear and loneliness. We yearn to be responsive to the cry of the earth. The glowing colours of our communal soul's desire dance with luminosity, reminding us that one in the heart of God, we create a tapestry of threads that interweave darkness and light, absence and presence. Interwoven within the divine desire, we thread our love into the midst of suffering, and together, vulnerably long to become our wholeness in God.

Julian's tapestry of words, knit together in love, affirm the on-going awakening and maturing of both our personal and communal sensual-soul awareness. Her sensitivity to the mystical senses reminds us that this capacity to be filled to overflowing with sensual soul-knowing enables us to delight in our sensual world and expand into and beyond our senses into the

silence of simply being one-in-one-another. Just as the beauty of the *Lady and the Unicorn Tapestries* immerses us in wonder, awe and silence, Julian's words dance in our imaginations. She encourages us into a humble, continual prayer, affirming:

...we shall all come into Love's Presence, now in this life, clearly knowing our-self as endlessly hidden in God. God, truly seeing, fully feeling, spiritually hearing, delectably smelling, and sweetly swallowing, until we see God face to face, homely and fully. (*Revelations*, 14.44).

Now, in this moment, our communal sensual soul is being filled with sweet touchings of presence. When we enter into the heart-soul of collective humanity connected to the soul of the earth within the eternal ground of Love's silence, our one soul's desire awakens from within this shared spaciousness. Our sensuous soul ways of knowing, truly seeing, fully feeling, spiritually hearing, delectably smelling, and sweetly swallowing expand. Harmoniously, our longing resounds in the silence. We feel divine love touching our vulnerability. We see how darkness is the dwelling place of light. We hear the eternal love song, smell the delectable healing balm, sweetly swallow and become more and more a flow of Love loving. Hidden in the heart of God, we become compassion for our world.