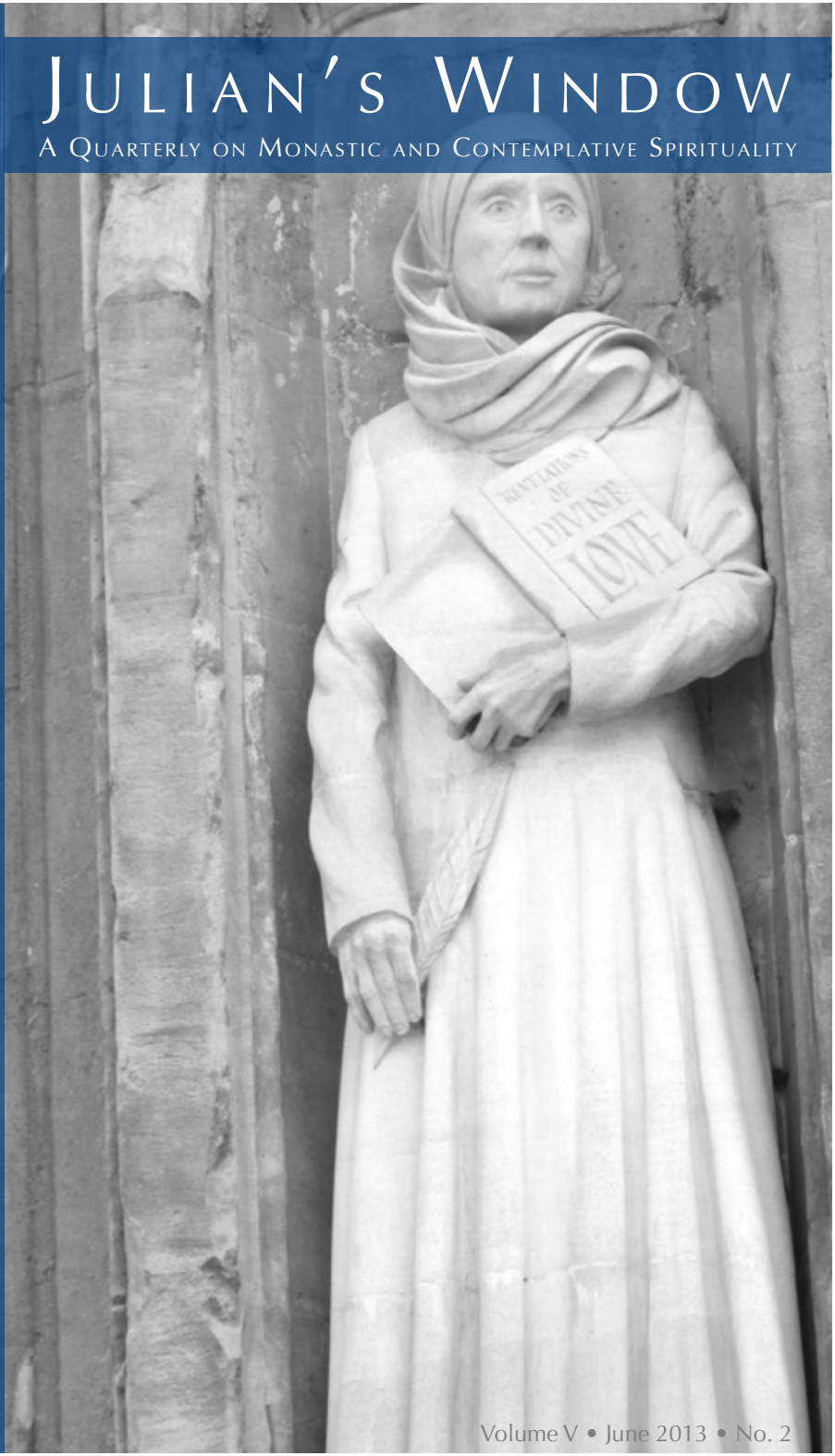
The Order of Julian of Norwich

Julian's Window

A Quarterly on Monastic and Contemplative Spirituality



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On the cover: The statue of Julian on the west face of Norwich Cathedral; photo Patricia Nakamura

The Order of Julian of Norwich

is an Order of contemplative monks and nuns in the Episcopal Church. Our aim is to renew the spiritual life of the Church in three ways: first by a renewal of the contemplative monastic tradition, second by supporting a vibrant community of affiliates who are a bridge between the monastery and parishes, and third by occasional works of mission in publishing, spiritual direction, and hospitality. For more information on the Order, please see our website at **www.orderofjulian.org,** through which we publish articles on the spiritual life, and liturgical resources.

Julian's Window, also found on our website, is published quarterly. For permission to re-publish, please write to the Order:

The Order of Julian of Norwich
2812 Summit Avenue
Waukesha WI 53188

Listening to the Word

Mthr Hilary OJN

There are six days until the Passover. Jesus has six more days in which he can work, six more days in which to effect the re-creation of everything, six more days of light before night comes, six more days until the Exodus.

Jesus and his disciples are guests in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany, and playing out at the dinner table is the original template, the original enactment of every morality play that will ever follow. Two people could not stand in greater contrast than do Mary of Bethany and Judas Iscariot.

In the years of his ministry, Mary has been listening to Jesus and attending to his voice, Reality made present. More than that, Mary has been hearing Jesus, and so well that she sees and understands what, in six swift days, is going to come to pass. In profligate, lavish response to Jesus' profligate, lavish love, Mary does for him what she had only recently done for her brother Lazarus.

Even more an intimate companion of Jesus, Judas has also been listening to Jesus in the years of his ministry. But Judas is not yet hearing Jesus. All he hears is the inner voice of self-preservation and self-interest that, if followed, will indeed ensure that the poor are with us for ever. Judas has seen God act in the midst of Israel, yet like Israel, does not yet perceive God's purposes. Unlike Mary, unlike even Isaiah's desert jackals and ostriches, Judas cannot fulfill his destiny as a creature meant to bless.

But. But — there are yet six days, six days in which Jesus could make something out of the darkness and void that is where Judas' heart should be, if only Judas would let him.

This space I am standing in here in our chapel, bounded by the stalls and the altar, is the largest contiguous blank space in the monastery, and its heart. In it there is nothing more than a lectern from which Jesus speaks to us through the Scriptures. This space is a large-scale model of a heart, a soul, a desert space, in fact. If, in it, we listen and

hear — or not — the voice of Jesus present to us, this desert space will bloom and spring with water accordingly. If we hear the voice of Jesus speaking to us here in our hearts, even the unruly beasts of our inmost, unknown desires will hear and understand and honor their God. If we hear and understand, wherever we are, the perfume of our response to God will fill the house of the Church and the house of the world.

Pilgrims — affiliates and friends — stop at St Augustine's Abbey Canterbury UK, late 2012. Patricia Nakamura is center front.

Pilgrimage

Patricia Nakamura AOJN

If pilgrimage is a seeking, a traveling toward, it is also a leaving behind, a walking away from. A fleeing, perhaps? Temporarily, I abandon phone, Facebook, e-mail, even newspapers.

If we were Chaucer's pilgrims we would walk from Heathrow to Salisbury, Canterbury, and Norwich. Julian's 2012 pilgrims, a softer lot, will rely upon coaches and cars.

But our minds, our hearts, are set upon the medieval.

How can any age that created magnificent, soaring Salisbury Cathedral be termed Dark? The cloud-piercing steeple goes a fair way toward heaven. The Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Salisbury was built in an astonishing 38 years, from 1220 to 1258. And so it is one style, all of a piece. How in the world was that 404-foot spire built, constructed without modern cranes? For more than 750 years, it has been "the Mother Church to several hundred parishes in Wiltshire and Dorset." The Chapter House displays the Magna Carta, signed in 1215.

A visit to a much humbler church is a totally different experience.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
Such a joy as none can move;
Such a love as none can part;
Such a heart as joys in love.

George Herbert lived just 39 years, 1593-1633. He served tiny St. Andrew's Church, Bemerton, "where the Roman road to Old Sarum crossed the River Nadder," and lived across the narrow street with his wife in the Old Rectory. He could have had a "glittering political career" or devoted himself to scholarship. But eventually he listened to his mother, "embraced the priesthood and accepted the living of the small, insignificant parish of Fuggleston-cum-Bemerton in Wiltshire." How astonished he would be at our devotion nearly 400 years later.

Much of his poetry reflects the struggle:

I sent a sigh to seek thee out, Deep drawn in pain.
Winged like an arrow: but my scout Returns in vain.

Yet his most famous poems describe an ultimate peace, and strong echoes of Julian's certainty:

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back…
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

Canterbury is home, somehow.

Yes, I have been here before, even sung in chorus in that many-nichéd building. But it is the Compass Rose that marks this as the center of the Anglican Communion, the Anglican/Episcopal Church. It holds the cathedra of the Archbishop of Canterbury, our symbolic head.

And it is a welcoming place, especially to those such as we, privileged to live for a time in the Close, steps from the great Cathedral. Walk through the great gate — next to the Starbucks — and enter a warmer, calmer world.

We walked through centuries, with Augustine and his monks, with Queen Berta, with Thomas à Becket. And with those violators of sanctuary.

Among its ancient, silent stones, I was reminded somehow of the "Chinese dragon" door knocker on Durham's cathedral: a fugitive achieved sanctuary when he grasped that ring.

We need places of sanctuary today, safe places where modern malevolence is walled out, places of peace and protection.

Cathedrals, I think, must be beacons of light to whole communities, to all in them, Christian or not. Their bells ring out, their doors are open, even to those who never enter.

And later Canterbury Cathedral's amazing 13 bells do indeed ring and ring and *ring*!

Norwich is our ultimate destination. And for some reason I cannot pin down I feel some apprehension about getting there. It is the center of our collective being as Julians — Julian's — and the center point we have approached gradually, even circumspectly, on this journey.

Oblate Kay Ford lights a candle at the intercession globe in Norwich Cathedral

Norwich Cathedral cloister garth, with modern labyrinth

The Cathedral greets us first. Formally the Cathedral of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, Norwich, seems to us the Cathedral of Mother Julian and St Benedict, as they stand, one on either side, of the West Front. The sculptor, David Holgate, describes his work on the figures commissioned by the Dean and Chapter "to commemorate the new millennium and the 900th anniversary of the Cathedral's foundation", which for its first 450 years was also a Benedictine monastery.

Holgate, a local Norwich artist, "decided he wanted to use modern people as the subjects for his statues." He felt people would not have looked all that different; he chose "21st century personalities, even though they were in historical dress."

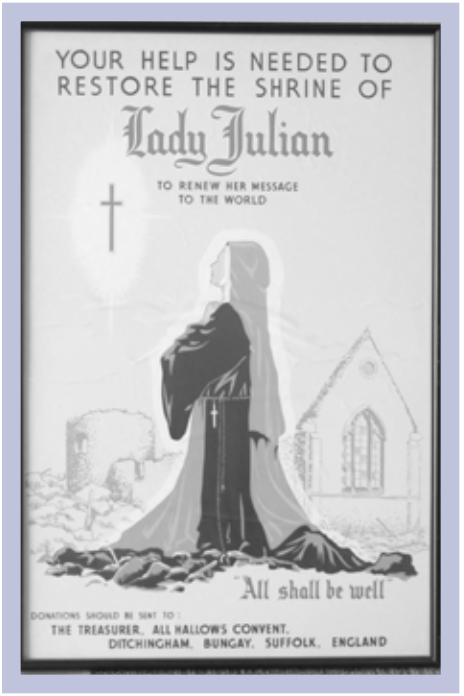
A jazz drummer became the medieval monk!

And a Filipino cleaning lady, slight in stature, became the model for the Lady Julian. "She had the right sort of face to give this sense of spiritual calm."

Entering Salisbury Cathedral one is stunned by the flowing water font and its still, reflecting surface. Here, in Norwich Cathedral, lacking such a mirror, one is tempted to lie flat out on the floor and gaze up. The glory and fame of this building is its 1106 roof bosses. Each juncture of rib and vaulting in the soaring Gothic nave is pinned by a carved, circular picture. These contain the familiar, the homely, and the fantastical, in persons, animals, and mythical creatures from the artists' imaginations. A few personal portraits reward the careful eye. Green Men lurk.

And then, at last, we cross the city to Julian's place.

Little remains that Mother Julian would recognize. The site has for centuries held a church, but bombing in 1942 reduced that building to rubble. Her writings and her 40 years' residence in a tiny cell attached to the church of St Julian saved it from complete removal



and inspired its reconstruction. The cell today is perhaps twice the size of Julian's, and more elaborate, with a simple altar at which our pilgrimage leader celebrates a pilgrim Eucharist.

And Julian is present with us, in her spirit, in her words:

He showed me a little thing: the size of a hazel nut in the palm of my hand, and it was round as a ball.
I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: "what can this be?"
And it was generally this: "It is all that is made."
In this little thing I saw three characteristics:
The first is that God made it,
The second is that God loves it, The third is that God keeps it."

And here, perhaps, the eye of our understanding, in each of us and all of us, sees a little clearer.

Holy Silence, the Transforming Energy

Bella Hoffman ObJN

I like working late at night, because it is quiet. No one is disturbing me. I do not have to multi-task and I feel like I can *breathe* for a minute. I feel more relaxed and I am also more *aware* of the stress in my body and how tired I am. I am more aware of my thoughts and I can pay much more attention to simply being. And when all is silent and the stupid cell phone rings it is like a shock wave of energy that goes through the body.

To become aware of silence we have to become quieter and this is not an easy task in this world of noise. One cannot see silence but one can be aware and hear silence, first an absence of noise.

We go to sleep at night to quiet our bodies and minds to regain energy. It allows the body to function again for the next day to be productive. When we are quiet (silent) we can *observe* better. Our blood pressure lowers; we do not lose energy, but we retain or gain energy.

There are many different silences. For example: the silence of a tumor growing, or the silence of a baby growing in the womb of its mother. There is the silence when we are angry and we decide not to speak or the silence before a storm.

The silence I am thinking of is within us all, a light we have been given as a *gateway* to hear and absorb. A Holy Silence that provides growing energy to transform. Silence allows us time to recognize and understand what is transforming us and what are we being transformed into. Is it God or the World?

In a similar way death is a time of silence and of transformation. We are made silent to give us the time and energy to transform. Jesus became silent during death so he could transform. A butterfly transforms when he is in a cocoon. It looks like death. It does not move according to our eye, and it does not speak, we can't hear it. It

simply is just there. But transformation takes place behind the scenes, in silence. Winter feels like death just before everything grows again and when life begins it does it *quietly*.

A seedling that falls off from a flower just lies on the ground. We think this is it, as it lies there quietly. It might be picked up by a bird and excreted somewhere else and then just lies there some more, still quietly. Yet the dirt from the earth or the rain will start softening the shell and small roots start growing into the ground to transform the seedling. All is done in silence. But here it is, the silence of its existence provides energy to grow.

Julian of Norwich was given God's Holy Silence in her anchorhold. She had silence already but the very deep silence was still to come. Silence given by the grace of God allowed her to hear God, gave her the energy to gather her thoughts, experiences, inspirations, and the attention to write her book and be transformed into a holy servant. This Holy Silence produced a book for us where *we can hear with attention* the Word of Christ. Here, reading in silence, he can speak to us and we too can be transformed, *healed*, be at peace, rest and be in joy. One of many meanings I found when googling silence was this:

Silence: a call for silence and attention, it descends from Anglo-Norman oyez/oiez, "to hear" or "hear ye."

Hushed like a holy place.

Hearing the Shepherd

Fr John-Julian OJN

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The first time I visited Mount Savior Abbey in New York, it was in very early spring, with a light covering of snow still on the ground. The driveway directions on the Abbey grounds were somewhat confusing, so I parked near a garage-type building and looked around for a sign that would show me the way to the chapel. As I turned a man came around the corner of the building: he was tall, thin, with a bearded and deeply-lined face, wearing jeans and a denim jacket -— and he was carrying a lamb in his arms. I must admit that I was so shaken by the sight that it took couple of moments before I could ask directions. He was, of course, a monk of the Abbey, rescuing a newly-born lamb from the cold.

I see that vision again in my mind every time we come to Good Shepherd Sunday! I am also reminded that the most ancient surviving depiction of Jesus that exists is a small Roman statue of a young, unbearded man with a lamb on his shoulders. Both of these images are far from the Victorian depictions of an androgynous Jesus with a lamb draped over his shoulders.

But what struck me particularly as I read over this Gospel were the words: "…the sheep follow him because they know his voice." And I was painfully reminded again about how many raucous and nasty words are being bandied about these days which present themselves as "the voice of the Lord".

Recently, I was thinking about this Gospel and I ran onto a wonderful image. The question was asked, "What is an acorn's greatest hope for the future?" And the answer was, "The acorn's greatest hope for the future is to become a 2000 pound acorn." And, of course, that is true — because an acorn knows nothing at all about oak trees. It only knows about itself in the present, and knows absolutely nothing of its real potential. It can only think in terms of itself — and magnifying that self.

And that is the real trap we all face in our spiritual lives. What we see, what we know, what we have experienced, and what we comprehend is for most of us, most of the time, the totality of what we believe to be reality itself. And we think we know ourselves pretty thoroughly. We think we know our capabilities and our options. In a very real sense, we are just like that acorn, and in our better moments, we really want to be the very best acorn, the very best self, that we can. I would like to be a superlative and excellent John-Julian.

But what I don't usually realize is that the *real* potential of John-Julian is something about which I have not even the faintest idea — something about which I really have no concept, no idea, no awareness and to which I give little or no attention. So, I go through life (on my good days) expecting and hoping to be a better John-Julian. I go through life as that acorn — when, in fact, God's intention for me is to become something immeasurably more: God's intention is that I become a sturdy, tall, massive, spreading, glorious oak tree!

But how do I get from the acorn to the oak? That's the question!

And the answer — to switch back to the earlier metaphor — is to recognize, to listen to, and follow the voice of the Shepherd.

But in order to do that effectively, I have to shake off all the mediocrity, the compromises, the conditioned reactions which my need for security has led me to accept as the whole of truth. I have to find a way to hear that Voice in the midst of the din of the world and Church in which I live. I have to start convincing myself that "No, that is not the exhaustive truth you have claimed it is!" "No, prayer is

not merely self-serving supplication." "No, living the Christ life does not just make me happy and pain-free." "No, bishops and priests are not better (or wiser, or more holy) than lay people." "No, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity does not exhaustively define God." "No, having a wife and children is not the greatest good on earth." "No, self-fulfillment and self-gratification are not valid goals for life." "No, I am not the center of the universe."

You see, our so-called "search for God" is rather like person in a vast dark cavern with a small flashlight: the light is shined here and there, on this or that, but it cannot be shined on the entire cavern. Our lives and our Christian history are full of people who have shined the light in one place or another — and declared that they have discovered God and Truth. And, for the most part, they are wrong and blinded to the breadth of Reality by a vision of one little bit of It. But to continue that metaphor, the only way we can come to see the entire cavern is when the cavern *lights itself up* completely — and then we tend to be blinded.

To best hear the Shepherd, we must flee from every one of our so-called "certainties" and realize that we simply do not have the intellectual or spiritual capability to define God in any way or even to define the totality of our own human nature. We must distrust ourselves, knowing that everything we know or think comes through many shifting filters. We must live always open to hear the divine Voice spoken in wholly unexpected quarters.

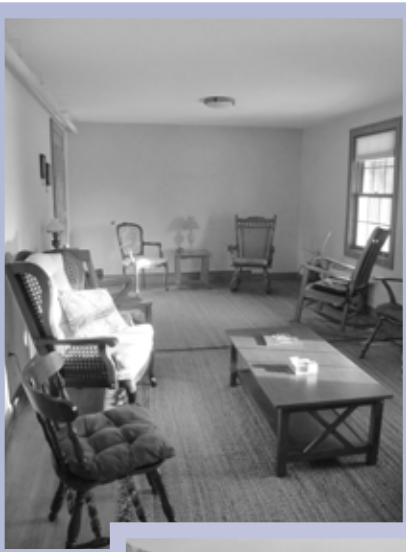
We must expect that the Voice will never offer unalloyed happiness, or ease, or freedom from pain and distress. It will offer instead incredible and undreamt of growth *through* what we experience.

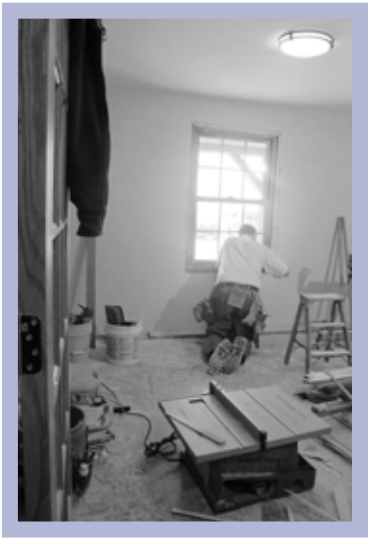
Lastly, when or if we finally allow ourselves to hear the Voice, it will resonate so deeply in our souls, and will so unexpectedly "fit" that we will be utterly astounded that we had not heard it before, and it will never again be forgotten. We will finally "follow him because we know his voice."

And the rest of the world — including most of the Church — will call us dangerous or mad — perhaps "mad acorns" or even "crazy hazel nuts".

What we have been up to this winter....

clockwise from right: the gutted former parlor and hall closet (new public bathroom with the new laundry at left); the old laundry exposed before being moved; carpenter at work in the new parlor; the new foyer (former laundry); the new parlor





Community Notes

The first crocuses did not show their faces until early April, and we did not see the first spear of asparagus until early May, so spring this year began in good form; April was accordingly full of (much-needed) rain, which delayed starting the vegetable garden long enough to make us change some planned crops.

The greatest busyness last winter was inside: A year to the day that we first began making plans for remodelling, the building permit came down in the first week of March, and we moved 'back in' to an entirely new space in the front hall area. Groth Design and Stier Construction did a beautiful job on what has long been the most problematic part of the building. To complete the effort the used furniture stores of Waukesha and Milwaukee yielded up several finds and, along with our pride and joy (which is the new laundry room), we must pronounce the foyer and parlor both perfectly suited to our needs and intention.

Oblate Scott Moseley and his wife Holly moved to Waukesha over the winter with the aim of lending a hand around the monastery and grounds. Currently Scott is employed in dozens of long-neglected tasks and, like the rest of us in the house, is never at a loss for good work!

Planting a tree is always an act of faith; last year, not knowing there would be a drought, we planted four. They are still thriving, and this year we are planting five more. With proper nurturing, they will all be here to oversee future generations of the Order.

Oblate Scott making short work of the upstairs library • Sr Cornelia prayerfully attending to an important task • 'A summer passtime', lots of it!

The Order of Julian of Norwich
Julian House Monastery
2812 Summit Ave.
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