Julian's Window

A Quarterly on Monastic and Contemplative Spirituality

The Order of Julian of Norwich

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On the cover: Theotokos, by a Juilan nun

The Order of Julian of Norwich

is a contemplative Order of monks and nuns in the Episcopal Church. Our vocation is to contribute to 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:

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A Householder with Things New & Old

Mthr Hilary OJN

Now and again one comes across a phrase such as, *the monastic wisdom tradition tells us* or, *the centuries-old monastic tradition teaches* and so on. The mental picture these conjure up is of a huge, monolithic object; solid, expansive, of great depth, and ready to dispense its bounty to anyone who may approach.

Maybe it is even something like a great treasure chest. Go ahead, push up the lid — you will need two hands for this, the chest is just huge. Inside is the amassed treasure of a people who have seen a thing or two, faithfully and mostly obscurely recapitulating the life of Jesus in their own time and place; the necessary word to fit the need of the moment.

A great deposit of monastic wisdom is indeed there for any who will search for it, stored up in countless conferences, commentaries, sermons, devotionals, and manuals of prayer and practice. But the monastic wisdom tradition is not a beautiful ancient creature captured forever in amber. It is living and dynamic, an embodied thing. It is and must be literally re-membered from one generation of monks and nuns to another, laid down layer by living layer.

Building up the monastic treasury is a kinetic process, which the Holy Spirit enables and through which she breathes. If the structure is to last, each new layer must be able to bear its share of the weight.

For centuries in the form of Third Orders, and anew in different forms since the last part of the 20th century, increasingly the monks and nuns laboring in contemplative wisdom's vineyard are being joined in a very active way by their communities' Oblates, Associates and Companions, and by the efforts of today's New Monasticism. These then share what they have gained with their own parishes and extended communities, sometimes in a more direct way than may be possible for monks and nuns themselves. In this issue of Julian's Window, we are pleased to share stories of this shape of contemplative vocation from a few of our own Oblates and Associates.

Vocation as Mercy

Kai Ce Burton ObJN

"Everyone who comes to me and listens to my words and acts on them, I will show you what such a person is like. Such a person is like the man who, when he built a house, dug, and dug deep, and laid the foundations on rock: when the river was in flood it bore down on that house but could not shake it, it was so well built." (Luke 6:47-48, New Jerusalem Bible)

Come, listen, act. This is the imperative Jesus commands, and it is to this that I have responded by becoming a baptized Christian (a total surprise) and by seeking and finding Oblate life in the Order of Julian of Norwich.

Why did I present myself for baptism in middle adulthood? Why did I continue on to become an affiliate of a religious order? Why a professed Oblate? The answer to all is summed up by this: I was compelled. Come. Listen. Act. I am baptized, and I am vowed, because I must be. It is the path that Jesus calls me to, and because so, it is the one that brings aliveness, rightness, and vibrancy to my life. It is home.

The Rule of Oblate life gives me a frame that keeps me centered in God. Across the years it has proven to be essential. Being an Oblate has been quietly creating the foundation for my life in Christ that I have discovered to be solid through joys and woes, ease and hardships. How blessed those whom you choose and invite to dwell in your courts, we shall be filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple. This has been my experience as a Julian Oblate living into our vows — little glimpses of the good things of Jesus, my home. These vows create for me a personal horarium. They inform my choices, priorities, intentions and behaviors. Julian's lessons and spirituality direct and shape my formation. Oblate life is proving the yeast that leavens: structure, guidance, community, accountability, these gifts help me mature and grow. I need the Order in my work of becoming human. I often experience a wave of gratitude for having found OJN, coupled with a terror of wondering what if I had never

found home. It is a feeling so acute it brings tears to my eyes and a twisting sensation in the region of my heart.

In professing Oblate vows, I have said yes to a vocation that is stretching me toward conversion of life. I believe the Julian Community essential to this most elemental human purpose. Life as a member of a church community was just not enough. I needed and wanted something more — more asked, more required, more received, in the company of fellow seekers to guide, challenge and support me.

I thank God for my Oblate vocation! And that is a word, I believe, that really needs to come out of the closet. How wonderful that vocations are not limited only to our monastic brother and sister religious. How awesome we have options of affiliation, vocations that come in different shapes — specific, particular patterns to which God invites certain ones. I am so grateful for the shape of my vocation! I feel the rightness, and the necessity, of my Oblate life. I see, across time, how much God is changing me through it.

Finding home, following the path, has most recently led to service as Warden of Oblates. Again, the invitation felt utterly compelling. I cannot even begin to imagine how this mantle will shape me across the next eight years, but I give thanks knowing it will do so, and profoundly. As Warden, I now have the privilege of pastoring my brother

and sister Oblates. They are living examples of God's furthering activity revealed through the Oblate vocation. I find myself constantly awed by the goodness of God, and by the wonder of being a member in this community. What a good life we are called to, thanks be to God.

Doors to God's Presence

Richard Carlson AOJN

Looking back on my life, my spiritual journey can more accurately be described as a "spiritual longing" — always trying to hear God's word, to see Him, and to understand Him. This longing also comes from a strong desire of my heart to have a relationship with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Being affiliated with a religious Order has given me the discipline for a daily office and devotions, for contemplative prayer and reflection, for intercessory prayers for the Order and others, and for the practice of *lectio divina*. This monastic approach has certainly been an invitation to participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, with particular attention to Jesus's own call to solitude while going apart to quiet and desolate places. Like Jesus, we too desire entering into prayerful communion with our heavenly Father.

Silence and solitude have become so important to me in my contemplative approach to prayer and praise. Silence is a discipline that enables me to listen for God's presence and words. Two years ago, I arrived early one morning at the beautiful Olympic Golf Club in San Francisco to watch the U.S. Open Golf Tournament. The ocean air was cool, the cypress trees offered their shade and fragrance, and lush green fairways and putting greens were everywhere. For me, this was a dream come true — perhaps, even an epiphany waiting to happen. It did happen. I was alone in silence, walking the course. Suddenly, without warning, I was "touched" and brought to tears. In

His presence, I was being held and loved. There is no other way to describe this moment other than to say that something very special had happened to me. God was speaking. In my seventy years, this was a moment that brought me in touch with God, a moment in which I also realized that there is no greater Peace anywhere else than to be with my heavenly Father. I also realize that having Peace within myself will hopefully allow me to bring Peace to others.

My sense is that through contemplative prayer and meditation, I can become a servant of love and perhaps, even a role model for some.

This is an exercise of contemplative meditation that I practice on many occasions, in silence: with eyes closed, I picture a large circular room with one hundred doors, evenly spaced, all the way around the room. At the very center of the room is seated Jesus Christ. At each door are people from all walks of life, lined up, waiting to enter the room: a large portion of humanity is lined up at these doors to see Jesus. Looking at Jesus, I see him with his arms out-stretched and open, stating, "Come to me, ALL of you." Christ is waiting to embrace all of these people, with no qualifications or conditions to be met and no periods of discernment or considerations to be made. Everyone is welcome and everyone is loved and embraced by Christ for all eternity.

What I hear God telling me during this contemplative period is this: "I am here to proclaim, my children, that the greatest gift that you can give yourselves is the opportunity to love others." "Seize it now." What a simple message that can change lives. Thomas a Kempis's beautiful message adds to this. He states, "The man in love flies high, runs swiftly, and overflows with joy. He is totally free for there is nothing to hold him back. He gives all for all and possesses all in all since he rests in Him who is supreme and from whom all good things proceed to flow."

Joy in Communion

Victoria Burkhart Faherty AOJN

The joy of being an affiliate of a religious order for me is being an accepted member of a wider Christian community of seekers and servants of the Lord whose company ever helps me in my quest to be a better person.

Vows to the Lord in the Order places disciplines in my spiritual life that have ever and only helped me to grow, even at a time in my life when the disabilities attendant upon the existence and recurrence of a benign but invasive tumor in my head have limited not only my physical life but also my abilities to think and to recall, to speak fluidly and to engage in an academic life that was my main avenue of endeavor to love my neighbor.

The Order of Julian of Norwich has quite literally extended the miracle of my ongoing, cheerful, earthly life: while I can no longer share what I was formally taught, nor extensively volunteer my time for activities for those in need, the Lord has let me retain both my ability to pray and my love of praying for others.

Jesus repeatedly is said to betake himself "to a lonely place" for prayer: to me, this is betaking himself in the created world from distraction from prayer. This is what the Order affords us — the blessed opportunity to thank God for our being so loved by him, and the blessed opportunity to pray in a most encompassing way, for each other, for each in any need, and ever for the preservation of the Church in its mission to share the good news. The Order strives to fulfill these ultimate objectives of the Church and most nobly exists within it. In all, my affiliation with the Order humbles and buoys me.

Stability in the Midst of Transition

Fr Rodney Davis AOJN

My God! There is a nun in the church. This was my initial reaction to Episcopal monasticism. The year was 1974. My wife and I were newly wed and looking for a faith community. She was a culturally estranged Roman Catholic and I was an on again, off again Methodist or sometimes Lutheran. We had been told that the Episcopal Church might be a middle ground for the two of us and picked Sacramento's Trinity Episcopal Cathedral out of the telephone book. (Yes, it was so long ago, that....)

Sue immediately felt at home with Anglican liturgical worship. But liturgical worship seemed a bit mysterious to me and kind of spooked me out. Then, just as I was becoming accustomed to it, I walked into church one Sunday and saw, of all things, a nun. Yes, a nun, in full regalia no less. There she was, sitting quietly in a pew near the pulpit. What was going on? Are we having an ecumenical visit? No, the Dean of the Cathedral told me. This was Sister Alice of the Sisters of the Transfiguration, an Episcopal monastic order that was building a chapter house elsewhere in the Diocese. I was dumbfounded, but immensely curious.

Thus began my investigation of and eventual love affair with Episcopal monasticism. The more I learned about the discipline and missions of monastics, the more drawn to them I became. And the more committed I felt to making certain that they were materially and spiritually supported. My reading of Church history convinced me that in each transitional period when the Church was struggling to find its way, followers of Jesus were able to turn to monastics as faithful remnants and inspirational models. Their extraordinary commitment has always provided grounding, comfort, and assurance that all will be well.

So, at the urging of my rector, I immersed myself in information about the Order of the Holy Cross, an order he was affiliated with. There is much to love about these faithful men, and one of them even served as my spiritual advisor during my years of study at Church Divinity School of the Pacific. However, it was eventually to the Order of Julian of Norwich that I found myself drawn. The place prayer had in my life fit well with the Order's mission. And it is that mission that I continue to feel a commitment to supporting.

Yes, I benefit greatly from the discipline affiliation with the Order has led me to. But this is a secondary reason for my affiliation. What primarily drives my continuing commitment is what the monastics and affiliates of the Order are doing through their prayers. Their modeling, their example, and their prayer life needs continued support. Like their monastic forbearers, they are serving as a faithful remnant during the present time of transition for the Church. They matter.

Recently I attended a lecture by Alice Waters, our national treasure who has done so much to bring our nation back to healthy eating. One of her themes was that our nation needs to recapture what she named as a "slow food

culture." That our busyness, which is facilitated by our dependence on convenience and fast food, is leading us to live our lives in a constant quest for forms of instant self-gratification. By doing so we are losing foundational values, such as patience and commitment to community. She said that in our quest to secure what is cheap, we are losing our appreciation for the real cost of things. For her, a commitment to eating real food centers us and reminds us of real costs and real value. The Order and its mission creates a similar dynamic. Its practice and discipline facilitates a slowing down and focusing on essentials. It models the very "slow food culture" that Alice Waters advocates for, and with it a return to the values we all strive to emulate.

Finding Home Through Vocation

Douglas Beck ObJN

Here in Maine, I make regular attempts to engage with the great beauty that surrounds us. Often, this engagement is a hike, often in Acadia National Park. For the most part I stay to the few trails that I know well. I may venture onto a new path from time to time. To remain safe while exploring that new trail, I may take a path off of the trail that is already familiar thereby acclimating my internal GPS. But, by doing so, I know that I limit myself in my encounters with all that the Park has to offer. So, occasionally, I will choose a new hike, altogether. That is exactly what I set out to do this past September.

"It's easy to lose the trail on the ridge, so watch carefully for cairns and blue blazes." So reads the description of one hike that I considered in my trail guide. Because of this warning, I chose differently. Yet despite my carefulness, I missed some of the markers and went off the trail. Eventually getting back *on* it gave me the gift of a deepened experience of gratitude for finding my way. But, also, the experience led me to a deeper enjoyment of all that I encountered as I continued onward.

A marker in

At first glance, what happens in day to day living may not seem to have much to do with a vocational life. But, the deeper experience says that it has everything to do with a vocational life. These outer experiences are, themselves, a mirror image of the interior. The inner yearning I have for home, while satisfied geographically by moving to Maine, continues to invite. It, too, beckons homeward. The yearning will always be there in this life. Can I take steps toward it? Can I live a life that always responds positively to it, God's invitation, in my life? I can do the best I can in saying yes, however imperfectly, and leave the rest to God.

Five years ago I experienced a health scare. In it was the deep invitation to rethink and take more seriously the inner pull. What was I missing? What had I been avoiding? Perhaps I was afraid, but of what? Was I investing too much time in living for others and their stories of me? Probably. So, I committed to exploring my yes and to do my best at letting my life respond to that yearning.

In my searching, I uncovered the heart of a monastic. Previously, I am not certain that I had the language to voice this. But, I was encouraged to begin to learn. Through conversations and reading, I had my first encounter with Julian. In her, I found a friend giving voice as well as challenging many of my own thoughts. At the same time, I discovered the Order of Julian through a church friend and mentor. Misconceptions and fears were quickly laid aside. Here was a community of men and women, lay and affiliate, living in equal status according to their particular Rules of Life. In this community, the values that I grow toward are tended and shared as relationships deepen through God and in one another, imperfections and all.

For a very long time time, I had known that for me, Sunday was not enough. I was exploring ways of being Church in all of life. Though I had been doing so privately, I longed to do so corporately. Being part of the Order of Julian has fulfilled this for me. As in Jesus, as in Maine, as in hiking a new trail; a deepened sense of home has been found in the Order of Julian. That home is Love. It has no end.

Acadia National Park

Certain Words

Susan Fiore ObJN

I love words, especially the English language, which is so inventive and playful. Playing with words often leads me to theological reflection. Take the Christmas carol 'The First Nowell.' As a child, I thought that in the first lines

> "The First Nowell, the angels did say,
>
> was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,"

"to certain" was a verb, something like "to assure" the shepherds — the angels said it to show them that absolutely for sure they could believe the Good News: The baby lying in straw in a stinky stable was going to be someone special.

"Certain" is one of those two-edged words in faith: I'm certain that Jesus is Emmanuel — God with us. No matter how alone I feel, no matter how sad or frightened, "All shall be well", and not just for me, but for everyone. But if I'm certain about how that works, or whether God loves only "certain" people, or who qualifies as worthy in God's eyes, I've forgotten that the Good News was given first to simple shepherds, not to the "right people."

The desire to be 'right' is so human, and I'm always going to be human. Julian was herself a bringer of Good News: God made us this way and loves us just the way we are, and will fix the mistakes we make, even though we keep making them. God will make all things well. But when Julian asks Jesus to tell her how God's going to do it, he doesn't 'certain' Julian — or me — as to how or when, and I have to be content to be both certain and uncertain.

Book Notes: *An Infinity of Little Hours*

An Infinity of Little Hours: Five Young Men & Their Trial of Faith in the Western World's Most Austere Monastic Order

NANCY MAGUIRE
PUBLIC AFFAIRS PUBLISHING; NEW YORK 2006
ISBN: 978-1-58648-327-2
PP. 258

Nancy Maguire prefaces her book about the Carthusian monastic life with a quotation from the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard: "Of this there is no doubt, our age and Protestantism in general may need the monastery again, or wish it were there….We therefore need it out there like a navigation buoy at sea in order to see where we are…" But it must also be recognized that the monastic way is a foreign and unknown territory to most Christians — and the Carthusian life and practice is so extreme and austere that it seems alien even to many other monastics.

In a Charterhouse (the English name for a Carthusian monastery) each monk lives as a hermit in a separate two-story cell where he prays, meditates, does manual labor, eats his meals, and studies in silence, with certain Offices in the common church and very few opportunities for casual speaking. The author of this book is the wife of an ex-Carthusian monk who is on good terms with the Charterhouse that he left many years before — as are all of the long-ago novices who figure in this book. The book is a fascinating examination of Carthusian monastic life from the inside. But this is not one of those disdainful accounts of someone who fled the strictures of monastic life and is eager to ridicule them. With a loving integrity and respect, the wide variety of experience within the monastic life is dealt with and faced with clarity and honesty. As one is offered a glimpse of the core of this most austere of Christian lives, one encounters both impressive sanctity and puerile triviality.

The first half of this book is one of the finest expositions of the spirit and underlying principles of the monastic life in print. While the monastic orders most of us would come in contact with would not be nearly as ascetical, the underlying principles of order, discipline, sacrifice, learning, growth toward full maturity, obedience, profound and pervasive prayer, and the regularity of sacramental life all apply to other monasteries and convents. This book should be required reading for anyone giving serious consideration to a monastic vocation.

Community Notes

Our soap venture launched in mid-September with sales at the All Saints Michaelmas Faire in Milwaukee. Soapus Dei also appeared at local conventions, including Chicago, where some of our affiliates had a table for us at the diocesan convention in November. Mthr Hilary continues to work at R&D to get the bugs out of a few recipes which, once perfected will appear in the Shop this winter and next spring. Work also continues on our new website which we hope to have launched this winter.

Our Harvest Fest, rained out on two occasions, finally hit a clear sunny day, and a handful of affilites came and helped us take down the vegetable garden. The compost provided us with its annual mystery squash (pictured page 7), but one of the big surprises this summer was a flowering crab that broke into apples. The 'newly apple' tree gave us almost a bushel of fruit, and we joyfully made a few quarts of applesauce.

We also finally obtained an energy assessment for the monastery...in time to find out the chapel needed a new furnace promptly!

Fr John-Julian reports that Francis de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life* placed on a list of 100 best Christian books in the *Church Times*; the selection committee had chosen his Paraclete translation as representative.

Clockwise from the top: Margery Kempe (Associate Patricia Nakamura) selling Soapus Dei soaps at the All Saints' Michaelmas Faire; Fr John-Julian's cat Duma, who wished to show readers there is more than one cat in the Order; Goodbye to the Tomato Patch: making a mess at our Harvest Fest; Sr Cornelia as our master soap-wrapper

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