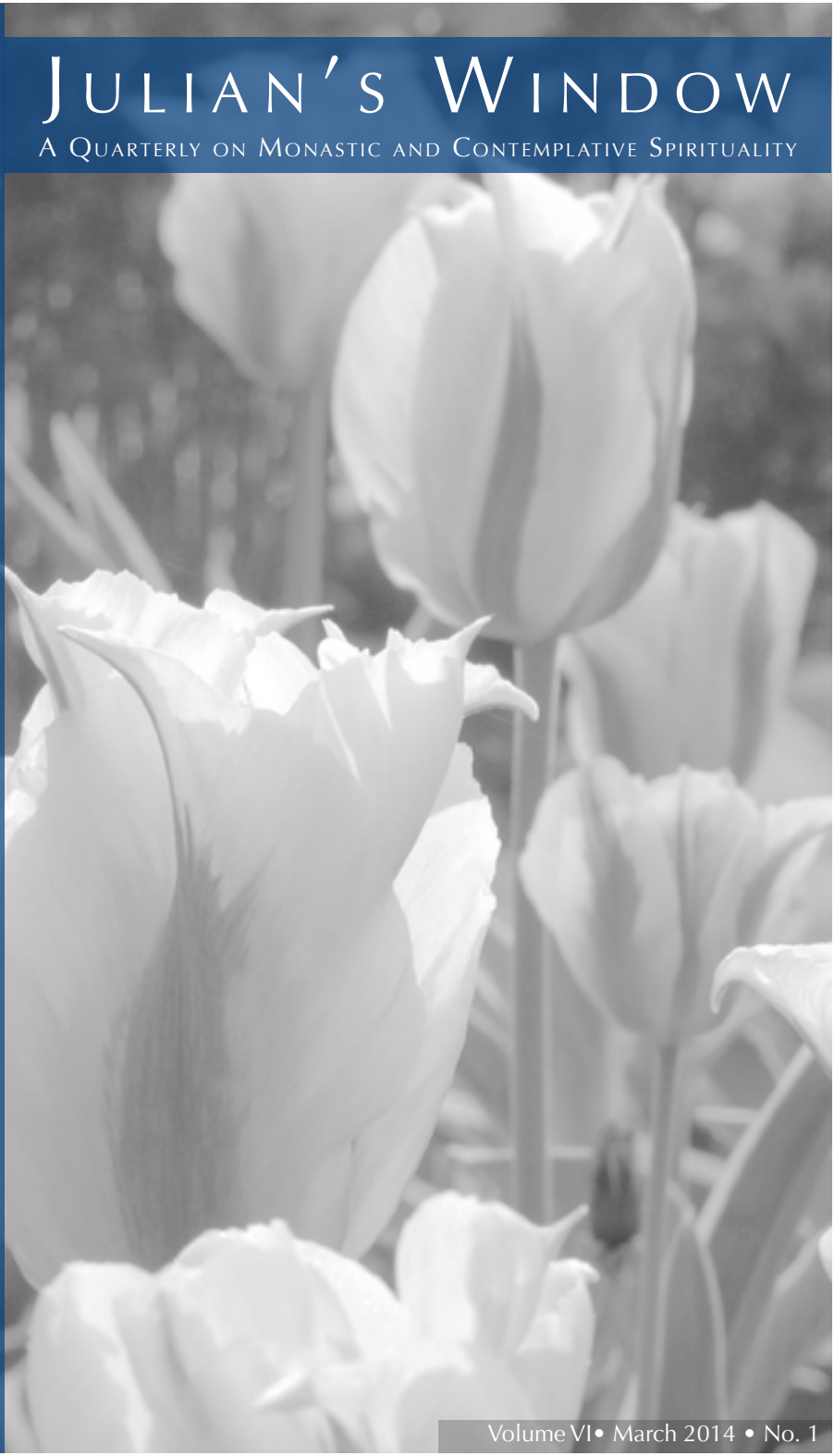
The Order of Julian of Norwich

Julian's Window

A Quarterly on Monastic and Contemplative Spirituality



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On the cover: Tulips in late spring at Julian House

The Order of Julian of Norwich

is a contemplative Order of monks and nuns in the Episcopal Church. Our aim is to renew the spiritual life of the Church in three ways: first by living this renewal in the contemplative monastic tradition, second by supporting a vibrant community of affiliates who are a bridge between the monastery and parishes, and third by 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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Judgment

Fr John-Julian OJN

For me, *translation* has been one of the most exciting undertakings in my own fairly exciting and multi-varied life. There is this intense struggle to try to discover what someone meant when she or he was writing or speaking in a foreign tongue. And we all know the hilarious mistranslations when someone uses the wrong word, or a word with the wrong emphasis and expresses an entirely wrong idea.

Once again, after nearly twenty years of work on translating Julian's writings, I came on to an obscure translation of her word Middle English *deme* — which has everywhere been translated as "judgment". I had been mystified by her uses of the word: for instance where she says, in reference to God not assigning us any blame for sin nor being able to forgive us: "Therefore my deliberation and desire was more than I know or can tell, because God Himself showed the higher judgment at the same time, and therefore it was necessary for me to accept that — but the lower judgment was taught me previously in Holy Church, and therefore I could in no way give up that lower judgment." And what I found was that her word *deme* carried the sense not only of our modern word "judgment", but of "authority" as well. So, this difficult passage *could* be translated: "God Himself showed the higher authority at the same time, and therefore it was necessary for me to accept that — but the lower authority was taught me previously in Holy Church, and therefore I could in no way give up that lower authority." And suddenly Julian's meaning becomes much clearer: she is matching the level and power of the *authority* of God against the level and power of the *authority* of the Church, and accepting both.

This discovery was in my mind when I looked at the Gospel with John the Baptist's judgments of the Pharisees. And then I remembered Jesus's own multiple curses of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 that are usually translated as "Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" but which phrase the Scholars' Version translates in far more acerbic and vituperative terms.

I found myself in the paradox of hearing the curses of John the Baptist and of Jesus and then also hearing the same Jesus say, "Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned." (Lk 6:37)

How do we deal with that apparent contradiction — with these guys judging others like crazy and then telling their audience not to judge?

For we are in the position almost every day of having to make judgments, of having to judge, and even having to judge the actions of others. I remember the sermon from my ordination to the priesthood in which the preacher reminded me that as a priest, I would be called upon to judge others, especially in the Confessional, but also in preaching and teaching. I would *have* to assess and judge between good and evil not only for myself, but also for others. And we all must do that: you and I *must* judge others when, for instance, we see behavior on someone's part that harms others.

"Judge" is just a very confusing and difficult word. And it seems an uncomfortable concept.

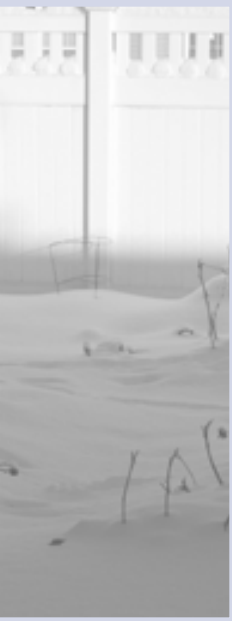
And then I remembered Julian's wonderful words from Chapter 76 that I have quoted so often: "…For the beholding of other men's sins makes, as it were, a thick mist before the eye of the soul, and we cannot for the time see the fairness of God (unless we can behold another's sin with contrition with him, with compassion on him, and with holy desire to God for him, for without this it troubles and tempts and hinders the soul that beholds those sins)."

What is she talking about when she gives exceptions to her rule not to behold "other men's sins"? As exceptions, she says (in my own paraphrase) "unless we can see another man's sins through his own contrite eyes; unless we see them with compassion on the sinner; and unless we do so with a holy desire to God on behalf of the sinner." And what each of those exceptions or qualifications calls for is a mystical bonding with the person whose sins we see: a bonding with his contrition as though it were our own; a compassion and an empathy bonded to him; and a longing to God on the sinner's behalf.

Do not despise sinners because of their failings, lest you too find yourself tempted in the very same way.

—St Isaac of Syra

Once again, Julian leads us in the direction of the commonality, the community, which exists and should be recognized among and between all human beings, allowing our "judgment" of them *only* as the outcome of our union with them.



But there is one "slot" in that ideal that I am unable to manage in exactly that way: it is what I can only call "justified judgment", and it happens when I make an appraisal of the behavior of another person that is causing harm — even serious harm — to others. I *must* judge the rapist. I *must* judge the loan shark. I *must* judge anyone who belittles or demeans or degrades or humiliates or abuses others — especially on supposedly religious or moral grounds, and especially if those others are defenseless. And I must do my best to bring those damaging behaviors to a stop.

Where does the "Do not judge and you will not be judged" line come in?

I think that moral theology comes into play here: that I must not, indeed I actually *cannot*, judge the *motives* of others, because it is never possible for me to understand or grasp or figure out the real motives of anyone's actions — even if the person him/herself expresses a motive (since we seldom even know all our *own* motives for our actions).

But even with that caveat, Julian's counsel stands: if I am going to judge another, I should stand in a human solidarity *with* that other human being in the very judgment. And that seems to me to be a massive demand and something very close to the perfection of Christian love.

What would happen if a Christian stood not only with the victims of sin, but with the sinners as well? What happens, for instance, to the child abuser? What happens to the condemned criminal? How do we witness against the offense, and still recognize our human solidarity with the offender? But in those instances where parents, relatives, communities, have openly expressed forgiveness to those who have committed terrible violence against them, it has been like an earthquake. Everyone was simply stunned! It seemed not to be a human response at all. But it was! Indeed it was simply a Christian response. They never claimed that they had not judged the murderers, but that they had forgiven them.

We must learn to suffer, not only from those who wrong us...but with them; to sustain them by our pardon, to carry them in our heart's prayer: to help them carry their cross from which they are the first to suffer....

—a Carthusian

Well, like Julian, I am not going to solve this conundrum, but I think we are facing here a radical proposal. And I think we can carry those two words with us into our meditations: judgment and forgiveness. How do they relate? Can they be one?

The Presentation

Mthr Hilary OJN

One might preach for days on the dizzying movement of the feast of the Presentation — "God to God himself presents" as the evening hymn has it. One might, but today I want to stay a little closer to the ground, a little closer to where theology is more accessible to our present reality.

If it is given time and a reasonable degree of availability, the monastic life of whatever tradition does do its inexorable and lovely work. And we begin it in hope, for in our rite of the clothing of a novice the habit is blessed with these words:

> "May [this habit] both symbolize and convey the life of true commitment to You and to Your will; through the poor Christ, the pure Christ, and the patient Christ..."

It is in today's feast, that, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, we encounter that poor Christ most clearly, presented to God in "a condition of complete simplicity, costing God not less than everything".

The movement of all these involved in the Gospel tableaux — Mary and Jesus, Joseph, Simeon and Anna, the often-overlooked sacrificial birds — all this can be seen as a living pattern for our own increasing openness to God, our increasing will to risk exposure, and as a sign of our indispensably communal life. For in one way or another we carry each other to God, offer each other, bear each other's burdens. We wait for one another, we hope expectantly for the advent of Christ in one another. We can be sure that a sword of grief will pierce our own soul also. As one monastic writer put it, sooner or later we will be nailed to the cross by our vows, and it will be just the last cross we ever wanted: we are wounded for each other, and by each other — *all this so that the glory of God may be revealed*. Here we are, poor with Christ, who came as one of us so that we could join the Holy Trinity in bliss. In this Trinity is a *We*, an *Us* so inclusive that there can no longer be any *them*.

Now, one could certainly get to the end of reflecting on the Presentation well enough without addressing anything of the older understanding of this feast, that of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For why should we continue to admit to the party that weird uncle we thought we'd finally got rid of, a fearfully misogynist, backward understanding of human reproductive life?

But I don't want to give it a miss because, just as we saw a few months ago with the yearly singing of the *Dies Irae* at the feast of All Souls, even a gravely incomplete understanding can still offer something of truth. If the Church has indeed become a learner in the kingdom of heaven she can without distress bring out of her store what is new and what is old.

Later in his ministry Jesus will have much to say about the nature of the biologically understood family system — mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, the children of Abraham — "this generation" always falling in upon itself, always trying to punch its way out of a small paper bag. When Jesus speaks of "this generation", the force of his words is always to relativize it in favor of Divine paternity. For this reason our usual understanding of where our life really comes from and is most truly situated must all the time be undergoing purification. The primary way in which we are to understand ourselves as human beings is as brothers and sisters of Jesus, children of our Father in heaven, no more and no less.

The older reading of today's feast properly corresponds to what Julian understands as humanity's lower part. Our contemplative calling

may have about it as much to do with self-love, self-preservation and self-interest as anything more transcendent — our motives are almost always an unfathomable mixture of yes and no. So we are always in need of presenting ourselves before God and submitting, as T.S. Eliot says, to "the purification of the motive in the ground of our beseeching."

But if we can do this — if we can stand for each other and with each other without flinching, without asking to be let off, without asking for mitigation, we will, every one of us, find ourselves grown into that condition in which God was presented as one of us, and where God died as one of us, "a condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything."

East of Norwich

Fr William L Bulson ObJN

The worship space of St Alban's Anglican Church, Tokyo, according to Japanese people who enter and pray in this place, feels holy and homey all at the same time. This is because, they point out, its architecture draws on some of the best of traditional Japanese architecture and construction techniques — lots of warm wood and clean lines, precise and simple joinery along with irregular beams. Benches line the walls of the nave. Choir seating is on either side of the small sanctuary with its clean, wooden altar. Even the cross on the sanctuary wall with black iron nails and a black iron crown of thorns, befitting a church with a martyr for a patron, is of worn, slightly warped wood. The cross is an example of *wabi-sabi*, that difficult to translate aesthetic of the beauty that inheres in loss. Everything in the architecture and design is earthy and refined all at the same time. I'd like to believe this is a space St. Julian would find homely and courteous. I have been rector here for just over a year.

St Alban's was established in the 1950s as an English-speaking congregation of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai (NSKK), which name is probably most faithfully translated as the Holy Catholic Church of Japan. It is the only English-speaking NSKK congregation in the Diocese of Tokyo and one of three in the whole NSKK. The NSKK is a thoroughly Japanese church in the Anglican Communion. There was an American-born assistant bishop in Tokyo years ago (a monk of the Society of St John the Evangelist), but western-born bishops have been rare since the later stages of Anglican mission. I know of only five western-born priests in the NSKK at present, from Hokkaido to Okinawa.

For the Anglophiles in Tokyo, and most of the Anglophiles I know here are Japanese, St. Alban's greatest importance is that it once welcomed Princess Diana. (Oh, and Prince Charles, too, people sometimes hasten to add.) And most recently Lord Carey and Archbishop Welby have stopped by (of course, while the rector was away.) For decades, St Alban's has given grants out of its annual budgets for social service non-profit groups, in particular a diocesan ministry that serves with Filippino immigrants.

Fully one third of Sunday attendance at St Alban's is native Japanese speakers, most of whom are NSKK members or Christian,

some not, who may or may not have English proficiency. The majority on Sundays are usually Anglicans from the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Ghana, Lesotho, South Africa, India....

St. Alban's is situated in one of the business centers of Tokyo. Plenty of glass and steel, overworked people walking to and from the metro station; police guarding the entry to the nearby Russian embassy to keep Japanese nationalists from entering the embassy environs and mounting blaring protests; Eiffel-inspired Tokyo Tower looming over it all and drawing tourists by the hundreds or thousands every day; and the hidden homeless of Minato-ku finding their way to St. Alban's and to St. Andrew's Cathedral next door. Down the other side of the hill is Zojoji, the world center of Amida Buddhism. On Christmas Eve, young couples make their traditional Valentine-esque trip to Tokyo Tower and stop in at St. Alban's for five minutes to see the liturgy, and then leave holding hands. It is a usual thing to walk into this space during a working day and find people in the warm quiet, still and gently attentive. Most of these visitors are Japanese, some of them Christian.

St Alban's ministries of service, prayer, and presence are joined to the ongoing life of prayer and stillness that is alive and hidden in the rest of Tokyo....

I often sit outside on the front steps of the church in my cassock before the morning and evening office, and watch the people, pray for them. Most of the time people walk by, peer into the church, take a look at me, and walk on. Sometimes in the evening, when the office candles are lit on the altar, people will take pictures from the sidewalk through the church's glass doors, like peeking through Julian's window, or they ask to go inside and look around. Some stay and sit in the darkened nave.

And every morning and every evening, some of the faithful, a mix of Japanese and expatriates, are now gathering for the Office, with a small set of people gradually taking on officiating ministry. Once a week, another group of people, of varying tongues, gather for still prayer. In this mix are some Julian readers, and even a Companion connected with the shrine in Norwich. This truly remarkable development goes mostly unnoticed by the city that surrounds us. I've had the joy and

honor, as a Julian oblate and as St Alban's rector, to support these people in their vocation of prayer and deep stillness. I am unusually fortunate to serve with a vestry that was excited that their new rector would start up the Daily Office again, as well as spend a good portion of the day in prayer himself.

But even more, St Alban's ministries of service, prayer, and presence are joined to the ongoing life of prayer and stillness that is alive and hidden in the rest of Tokyo, and in the NSKK as a whole. There is St Michael's, with Fr Seong and his still prayer group. There is Cafe Ekklesia, where Fr Bede and his group reach out to Tokyo office people with food and companionship, and then sit in silence together later in the evening. There are the contemplative sisters of the NSKK at Nazareth Convent in Kichijoji, not far from where the great filmmaker and animator Miyazaki has his Studio Ghibli museum. And on and on.

I have learned, and relearn every day, that we Julians are joined to a great cloud of witnesses in Japan and throughout the world who, with God's help, are quietly renewing the life of the Church, just like any Julian Oblate professes to do. Perhaps, if we here are truly blessed and humble, we may share in and witness to silence like that in an Endo novel, or the silence of Christians

who hid on islands near Nagasaki for centuries. The life of Tokyo renewed by Silence, the silence of the Word who is Crucified.

Free to Follow

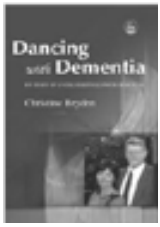
Sr Therese OJN

It is for freedom that Christ sets free, but it is not a freedom the world or even the disciples may recognise. If they are coming from a position of license, which is what their culture considers freedom, the freedom that Christ offers might be mistaken for what their culture deems privation of one kind or another. In order to be so free that nothing, not even themselves, can prevent them from being available to the Spirit, a lot of so-called freedoms will have to be renounced.

The Son of Man is in this world, but not of it, and so has nowhere to lay his head; and he calls those who follow him to the same freedom — they will have no positions to defend, no personal rights to protect, nothing to justify. They will have nothing for which to judge or to take offence. They will literally not need these things. That is real empowerment, but to be led so completely by the Spirit is a freedom which many will find incomprehensible or even wrong, and will refuse to let themselves be challenged or changed by Him. Sometimes they will prefer to hold fast to an identity of alienation, formed not by the transforming power of Christ's love, but by the ossification of past wrongs or the grievances of former generations. Thus, along the way, Jesus is told in so many words: "I will follow you Lord, but it must not cost me the smallest thing."

Those who are called to follow Christ, if they are prepared to follow him everywhere, no matter what the cost, may believe he is sovereign in them, but if they are humble — honest — they will find over and over in themselves dozens of towns still held in bondage to fear and where Jesus is not yet welcome, where grievances are clung to out of pride or immaturity, that prevent new situations from being seen in the light of grace. Jesus will not force his entrance, nor call down retribution on what rejects him. He will go on his way.

Book Notes: Who Will I Be When I Die? and Dancing With Dementia



Who Will I Be When I Die?
Christine Bryden
Jessica Kingsley Publications (1998)
2012
ISBN: 978-1-84905-312-9
pp176

Dancing with Dementia
Christine Bryden
Jessica Kingsley Publications 2005
ISBN: 978-1-84310-332-5
pp200

These two remarkable and unique books handle, define, and describe the experience of Alzheimer's disease from within that experience itself.

Christine Bryden met Alzheimer's head-on with a diagnosis in 1995 at the age of 46. In her books she tells it simply as it is, neither softening the unpleasantness, nor denying her own mental and physical decline. With tremendous courage, she describes the disease from the inside: recounting the pent-up frustration of being less and less able to care for herself, of the gradual diminution of her capabilities and of her once brilliant, super-active, professional life, and of the impact of her disease on family and friends. She shares what has worked with her, cautions about what has failed, and shares what she has learned.

She tells of her three primary sources of hope and healing: first, her second husband Paul who met her and married her four years after her diagnosis, clearly understanding what was ahead; second, what she calls "purr therapy" — the presence of her beloved cats who bring her calm and peace of mind — and finally, deep and serious engagement with her church community where she discovers and embraces true healing — no cure and no improvement at all in the course of her disease, but the defeat of the worst enemy and greatest curse: fear. Her engagement with her faith in Christ is not sentimentality, but a true acceptance and recognition of her dependence on Him. In the midst of her suffering she lives quietly certain of His presence and love even in her disease.

As an appendix to each book she provides an exhaustive primer on Alzheimer's: information as well as the demolition of the many of the falsehoods and fables that have arisen around it.

These books cannot be recommended highly enough. And do read *Who Will I Be When I Die* first.

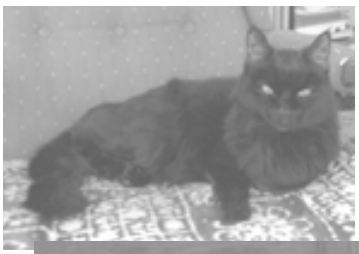
Community Notes

In Advent the community held its annual silent retreat. The same week Sr Cornelia had gone through her second hip surgery with flying colors, and a local oblate volunteered to come help her with at-home rehab work. She has made marvellous progress since then and is walking about every day.

Two years ago spring arrived almost five weeks too soon; this year, it seems determined to take its time. We have seen an increase in wildlife at the feeders, including a possum or two. Along with many others in January, our water supply was interrupted by frozen pipes, one of which burst and caused a spectacle in the laundry. The damage was minimal and was repaired quickly — and after 60 years, insulation was finally put into the ceiling at that spot.

In January, the same day that the pipe burst, our cat Tessa died very quietly and peacefully. Friends will remember that Tessa and her brother Murphy were imported from Texas at the age of 10 weeks in 1999, when the first incumbent Hazelnut was still with us. Currently Whitby is the only monastery cat (and does not seem to mind).

This winter we also have an alongsider — a person living with the community and discerning the possibility of monastic life.



Clockwise from the top: the plumber putting a hole in the laundry ceiling • clearing the roof after a snowstorm • guests at the winter feeder on the coldest day of the year • Tessa

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