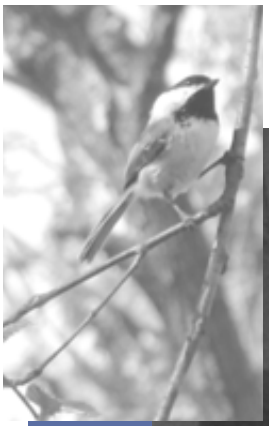
The Order of Julian of Norwich

Julian's Window

A Quarterly on Monastic and Contemplative Spirituality

Volume VII • March 2015 • No. 1



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In this Issue

Three Invitations to Become 1
Mthr Hilary OJN

Jesus Interrupts 4
Sr Therese OJN

Pilgrimage in Place 9
Mthr Gwynne Wright ObJN

Julian's Notebook 11

Book Note:
In Search of the Lost 12

Community Notes 13

On the cover: The Eleventh Station, in our chapel

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 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 and hospitality. For more information on the Order, please see our website at **www.orderofjulian.org.**

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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Three Invitations to Become

Mthr Hilary OJN

Mary — A Beginning

"And then the angel departed from her."

Mary has made her "yes" to God, to the mystery that will only be fully known years hence (and then only through death) and there she is. Gabriel leaves Mary to absorb the implications of his message as best she can at this point, and to begin.

This is the way we live. Here in between visitation and visitation, we make our eschatological hope kinetic, living out our vows in the mode of "await, allow, accept, attend". We live always with the more or less open wound of incompletion. This is not a mistake. It is not even a less-than-optimal proceeding made necessary by our cosmic situation, but an integral part of the program of human becoming. We may start out as people to whom things happen, to whom things are done, but beginning with "yes", we get to, and must take active part in our own destiny. The prophecy made to David, to Mary and to others is not characterized by immediate fulfillment but by potential. So it is that we are soon to be presented not with a full-grown Messiah action-figure, but with a baby.

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Our opportunities

The object of the game here is to become a real human being, conformed to the likeness of God our Father through Jesus his son, becoming holy as he is holy. Because we are susceptible to illusion, however, the proof of whether that transformation is taking place is not something we get to pronounce upon from the inside, in the abstract. It can be told only from the outside in the realm of the kinetic. Are we living Jesus in the world, or someone else? Those outside of us are the ones in the best position to tell.

Offering the other cheek for a second blow; giving to an oppressor your coat after he has just taken your shirt; bearing a burden two

miles when conscripted for only one — while the initial demands may have been born of thoughtless bureaucracy or rage in the other, each of these possible responses requires the other to stop and think and choose. A space has been opened up just large enough to admit a single grain of salt or a quick flicker of light, and in that space might lie the other's redemption. "You shall be holy for I am holy," God says, and God never coerces, God only invites.

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Divine Mercy

Jonah has been sent on a mission to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh; he is fervently wishing its outcome would be a message from God in the unarguable form of wiping the Ninevites off the map. But God is not cooperating. In his acceptance of Nineveh's repentance, God's patient, calmly-containing-everything attention seems to be directed more to Jonah instead.

Jonah sits under his bean-bush and blackly regards Nineveh. God sits by Nineveh and compassionately regards Jonah. The big work for Jonah now is simply to consent to this regard of God, and to the always-invitation to adjust his judgment so it accords with God's larger, very much other economy of mercy. Under the warm and warmer sun of mercy, it is Jonah's own heart that may or may not be melted, not the people of Nineveh. To speak in the fiduciary terms of the parable of the vineyard workers, the economic climate of Jonah's heart is coldly exacting — some new kind of compassionate coin will have to be minted there.

Jonah is disappointed to death that heads are not going to roll in Nineveh. The all-day workers in the Gospel vineyard are scandalized when the employer pays the latecomers the same as them. Divine Mercy sounds great but when it comes to our town, our vineyard, our heart, it tends to come as a scandal. It intentionally messes with our sense of justice, our ideas of what is moral, our ideas of what is necessary. And then? Divine Mercy doesn't stand there impatiently, arms crossed and foot tapping for us to show up, get it right, or get

on with it, but goes out at all hours to search us out, waiting quietly by and loving us while we try to get on board.

The great thing that always questions us is this: Is it possible that we could come to regard our world and everything in it — those "more than one hundred twenty thousand who cannot tell their right hand from their left and also many animals" — can we so pass through so many matters of justice and morality that we come to regard all of these with the Gospel eye of mercy?

In his letter to the Church in Philippi, St Paul says "let me see you standing firmly with one mind in the faith of the Gospel." This Gospel keeps on turning out to be so much more radical than we ever thought. And we haven't nearly gotten to the end of the truths that the Holy Spirit is going to lead us into when we are strong enough to bear them.

God has invited us here to this table by the self-gift of Jesus, God become bread. Take and eat — eat of God's love, God's justice and mercy and faithfulness, so that we may be complete in Jesus, perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

"And then the angel departed from her". Gabriel leaves Mary, and us in Mary, to get on with it, but leaves us all to it in God from whom we can never be parted. God is the ground, the context, and the content of our daily visitations, God whom we seek, God whom we have, God whom we long for.

Jesus Interrupts

Sr Therese OJN

'Why are you persecuting me?'

It is a very good question. Just what is behind all of Saul's great ardor? Why go up and down the country beating people with a stick? What does Saul get out of it?

'I was zealous for righteousness' Saul will say years later. He had an image of what constituted that, no doubt having been taught and taken the lesson entirely to heart as an instrument of security. And for whatever reason — prestige, further security, the externalization of his fears — he carried it even further. It was not enough to identify a threat, and then identify the threat with actual people; he felt compelled to stamp it out, even if that meant resorting to violence. So in his mind and heart, which are really the only places an enemy can be made, Saul makes enemies, and the persecution begins.

That Saul has done violence to himself in the process can be clearly seen by the violence he then commits and justifies, but Saul himself

does not seem to notice that he is running around the territories not under the impulse of a passionate faith — which would not need to resort to violence — but of a threatened security. He is in fact addicted to these impulses for he is not free to stop or change at any time, as he might be if he were acting rationally or in faith. It requires outside intervention to turn him around.

That persecution — essentially any action that singles out another as less worthy of dignity and respect than oneself — has its roots in the passions, makes it that much more volatile in the mind of one convinced their might makes right. Add to this emotional tangle a moral outrage of whatever kind, and persecution becomes not a passive reaction but an intentional and violent exclusion, whether by words or blunt force. The matter may be further complicated by the one who imagines a campaign of persecutions against themselves where none exists. In the case of Saul, he was quite clear about his intention to defend by persecution, even by lethal means, the truth as he professed it.

Jesus has destroyed the mechanism of sacred violence once and for all. The old ways of stabilizing society can only fail now that Jesus has blown the cover on sacred violence. When we resort to sacred violence anyway, we splinter society into small groups, each united around one victim or group of victims....Since these acts of violence no longer "work", the violence escalates....

Andrew Marr OSB
Tools for Peace

But to do and say as one likes in the interest of power or identity is a pretty narrow freedom on which to take one's stand, and none at all if that is to make one the puppet of one's fears and antipathies, and left at the mercy of the perceived offences of others in order either to form or state one's position. It is a form of violence that, like all others, affects the perpetrator as much and more as the object of their wrath. Worse, it carries the potential of duplicating itself in the victim who has not come to terms with his own wrath. To a very real degree, to the extent that one refuses to acknowledge another's humanity by persisting to denigrate, belittle, scorn, deride, or despise them by any color of persecution, especially in the name of what one holds to be the truth, one withholds that recognition of humanity from oneself, and one is that much less human.

When challenged, Saul recognized he was being confronted by an authority greater than the one he had assumed when setting out to persecute in defence of truth. Just as quickly he also recognized he had no real idea why he was persecuting, otherwise he could at the very least have stated his case. Instead Jesus, with one simple question, topples every justification Saul had in his arsenal. After this, what follower of Christ, pursuing any number of petty crusades private or public, will have a more substantial defence when likewise confronted?

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Nathanael lives in a world of limited possibility. It is defined by some good religious convention, and protected by some irony and cynicism. He may be free of deceit, but he does not hope for or expect very much.

But to anyone God will come as surprise and to the one of small horizons or small mind God will come at the point of scandal. That is only the result of arrogance or fear; God is not hindered by ideas of the impossible.

Nor are such attitudes limited to other people; each disciple has their own hidden Nathanaels that look askance, or refuse, or thunder and rage at the possibility God offers, often because it is addressing the precise points that they need to be converted. The missionary endeavour to such places in the disciple's own heart is usually carried out by those around them since they see it most clearly. The disciple himself could seek out and approach his own Nathanaels if he loved himself very deeply, or at least believed he was deeply loved, but this is extremely rare, and so it takes a Philip outside of him to say 'here is something you are still closed to.'

This is one of the most common features of monastic formation, whether initial or ongoing. The project of truly learning to love takes

a lifetime precisely because one does not come knowing how to love truly, fully, or unconditionally. In the monastery, prompts from 'Philip' are usually inadvertent: the bumps of life are what the Holy Spirit uses in order to get the disciple to hear. The catch is that what is heard as offensive, scandalous, frightening, worthy of derision etc, is not proof of the disciple's critical acumen, but the exposure by pinpoint of the exact spot where work needs to be done. And the louder the opinion, the more anguished the reaction, the more drawn-out the resistance, the deeper the problem is certain to be.

The encounter with Jesus is the point of opening to the infinite and unimagined possibility of God's action, and that is unlimited by either what has come before or what might come in the future. The one who hears will abandon every security, even the cynicism that protects them from loving and the potential for being hurt, for the sake of this relationship and the freedom it enables. It is an encounter that leads to a reordering of their entire world.

Nathanael has been invited to be a point of epiphany, to entrust himself to God in a way he never thought possible. This is his great opportunity for the conversion of his heart and mind to the infinite possibility of God. To the degree that he responds to this invitation, he will make room for possibilities undreamt of, both in his own life and others.

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In defiance of the counsel of those closest to him Jesus has gone to Bethany to visit bereaved friends.

Throughout the entire episode that follows, Jesus continually confounds the expectations of those around him. He is acting and speaking according to a position of faith and power as yet unimagined by his companions. And not the threat of his own murder, nor grief, nor any human anxiety, will distract him from doing what he must, from

absolute trust in the love and goodness of the Father he trusts will hear him at all times.

This event at Bethany offers the disciples one of the greatest examples of the power entailed in the faith they are called to, not merely a power that can raise the dead but power that can provide, inexhaustibly, life for themselves and others, even in the midst of the hardest and most painful conditions. What Jesus wants for them is not a method of coping but unafraid, unstoppable living, their response to events arising out of the life that he is, no longer enslaved by fear or ignorance or what they call their understanding. The fruit of such faith, as Jesus shows them, ultimately will be to fear nothing, neither threats nor death nor seeming calamity, because their trust will be in God, not their circumstances, and they will rest in that trust, since all things are in His hand.

Such a faith is the sort that can turn the world upside-down. It is the way of the world to act and think as if the experience of fear immediately grants exemption from being absolutely practical about faith, but the disciples are called to establish the kingdom of God, and this calls for great courage, great trust. They will encounter plenty of opportunities to be afraid, to be distressed, yet if their trust is not to rest in circumstances they will dare God's care of them even in the midst of their distress. If they believe, they will see the glory of God.

Pilgrimage in Place

Mthr Gwynne Wright ObJN

This past year has been one of many journeys. I've traveled over 3000 miles to *retire* in York England. Once here I've been privileged to spend a week on Iona, a few blessed days on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, a day trip to Norwich and a visit to Julian's cell, and many days in York Minster.

I've traveled by plane, train, ferry, car and foot. Some trips have been in planning for years. Some are planned for months or weeks. Some are spontaneous decisions to walk into town and be at the Minster. In all of these 'thin spaces', I find myself wondering about all those who for centuries have visited this place before me. What were they searching for? What was this space like then? What were they thinking and feeling when they were here?

Then I wonder about what pilgrims visiting centuries from now will think of these 21st century pilgrims. Are we really pilgrims — or are we tourists or visitors??

In these sacred places, I am in awe of the majesty of the ruggedness of Iona and the faithfulness of Columba in traveling by sea. I thought the 10-hour journey by train, bus and ferry was challenging enough!

We remember Cuthbert and Aidan who sought the solitude of Lindisfarne and the power of the sea and the tides to isolate the Holy Island each day. I'm blessed to see a rainbow over the Holy Island.

In the York Minster, I think of the centuries of faithful workmen: stone masons, carpenters, sculptors, clergy and visitors who have served while not quite knowing how their work would be seen. In talking to current stone masons they tell me that they pray and wonder how some of their work will be viewed in 600 years!

Yet in all this majesty, there is the ordinary. It's cold in the Minster in December. Trains aren't always on time. Weather can be

unpredictable and we need to prepare. The ordinary is in the extraordinary.

Then I come to Julian's Cell and wonder what she too was seeking. She tells us: "(God revealed himself) as if he were on pilgrimage: that is to say that he is here with us, leading us and staying with us until he has brought us all to the bliss of heaven. He revealed himself several times, as I have said, chiefly as residing in the human soul. He has made the human soul his resting place and his royal city." (Chapter 81: 1-4) So we travel and we journey and we plan and we hope. "My heart is restless until it rests in thee, O Lord" (St Augustine of Hippo). Julian found that in her anchorhold. Each of us continues to search; some by travel, some by work, some by prayer. Sometimes we find awe in the ordinary and ordinary in the awesome.The miracle is that place that we seek is already in us.

Julian's Notebook

Reflections on the *Revelations*

"Our good Lord showed Himself to His creature in various ways, both in heaven and in earth, but I saw Him adopt no resting place except in man's soul" (Ch. 81).

Our good Lord busied himself in earthly matters right from the Incarnation and all the way to his Passion: being a human boy, being a carpenter, being a man with a mission. We know that he sometimes stole away for some solitary prayer to recoup his spirits. But for a place where he truly could rest — he chose our soul? It is difficult to imagine a more un-restful place, so wrought up do we get about our many failings. Who could find any peace in such turmoil! But Julian insists that "wondrous and splendid is the place where our Lord dwells."

His love for each of us is so great that he wants us to be able to perceive it, "more rejoicing in his undivided love than sorrowing in our frequent failings." As he put up with his often-dunderheaded disciples, so he knows that each of us is likewise mired in self-concerns. His mission is to get us to long for the time when we are able — by means of his tender presence in our soul — "to over-pass from the pain that we feel into the bliss that we trust."

But do we ever stop and acknowledge, let alone take time to feel, just how beloved we are? Yes, there are God-given flashes put into our hearts — but as a regular thing? Julian says: "our life is all based and rooted in love and without love we cannot live." Throughout all her shewings she observes the "endless continuing love with a security of protection and blissful salvation ... mankind has been, in the foresight of God, known and loved from without beginning .... in this endless love man's soul is kept whole ... in this endless love we are led and protected by God and never shall be lost .... It is God's will that I see myself just as much bound to him in love as if He had done all that He has done just for me."

I have felt love like that as a little girl sitting on Mother's lap. Held gently but without any special fuss, I knew I was adored because I was me. Now, can I pass that sense of belovedness to my neighbor?

Book Notes: *In Search of the Lost*

In Search of the Lost: The Death and Life of Seven Peacemakers of the Melanesian Brotherhood
Richard Anthony Carter
Canterbury Press 2006
ISBN: 978-1-85311-789-0
pp 242

The Melanesian Brotherhood, formed in 1925, is an Anglican religious community of men in simple vows (i.e., vows that must be renewed at regular intervals) in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu Island, and Papua New Guinea, with their motherhouse at Tabalia, Guadalcanal. Their commitment is to go out in pairs to evangelize the unconverted in the isolated and nearly-inaccessible villages of the islands. Since their founding they have become a major and respected part of society in Solomon Islands.

In 2003, during peacekeeping work following the 1999-2001 ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands, seven of the Brothers were captured and murdered. Richard Anthony Carter, who was then serving as chaplain to the Brotherhood and had become a Brother himself, tells the story of that year and how the death of these seven men became a catalyst for a more lasting peace. Fr Carter moves between recounting events and reflecting on faith in real-time in a way that is intensely powerful, and the chapters on the work of forgiveness and healing following the surrenders of the last militants have an impact greater than any abstract reflection on the subject for being the fruit of an ordeal the author has endured alongside his community.

This is a book of such power and witness, often deeply moving, that it almost cannot be appreciated enough; and like the gospels, certainly not in one reading. These contemporary martyrs can bear witness with such vibrancy to the good news in Christ because they had first lived it. Fr Carter's testament of the faith and suffering of a community stands as a memorial to the seven martyrs and, in this time of increased martyrdoms, as a witness to the thousands of stories that may never be known or told. It is a book to remind one what it is to be a Christian, and the message of the gospel, and how to live it.

'Is it simply the way we tell the story that gives it meaning and creates its shape, or can we see something more? Can we see here the marks of the incarnation, and that the shape is the shape of the gospel — not a story forced to conform to what we would like to believe, but Christ, his death and resurrection, revealed even in our own lives?' *from the book*

Community Notes

As many of you know by now, our new website was launched right before Christmas (naturally, a few pages still need to be done). The online Shop however is proving more problematic, and far more complex a process than we had anticipated. Whenever this is complete — and we hope it will be within a few weeks — the Shop link will appear on the site. We will be able to ship to wherever you are in the world!

Extremely cold temperatures came again in January, but this time we were prepared and no pipes have burst thus far. We took part in the snowstorm that blew across the midwest at the beginning of February by collecting several large drifts and getting the temporarily snowed in.

After months of planning and waiting, we were finally able to complete our project of screening the great room for the privacy of guests. Specially made shoji screens from a company in Montana arrived and were installed in mid-January by Stier Construction. The screens do exactly the job we had hoped and we are getting used to the new look.

A special note to those who send donations in the Daily Bread envelopes: please be sure to write out checks to 'The Order of Julian of Norwich' (and not 'Daily Bread Fund'). Our bank will no longer be accepting checks that are not written explicitly to us. Thank you for understanding!

From the bottom, left to right: Mthr Hilary pouring soap; workers from Stier installing the screen tracks; half of the completed screens in the great room.

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