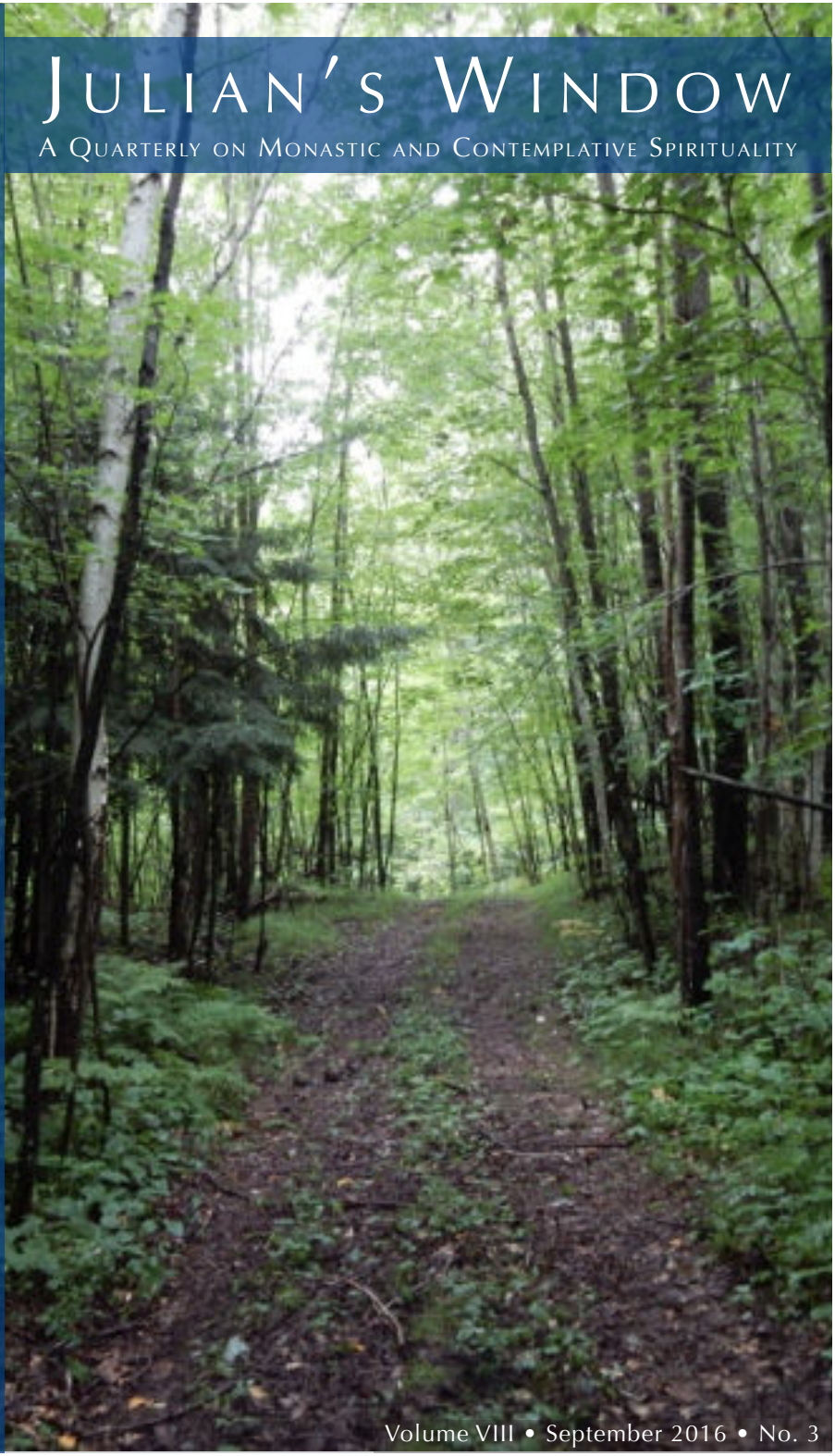
Julian's Window

A Quarterly on Monastic and Contemplative Spirituality



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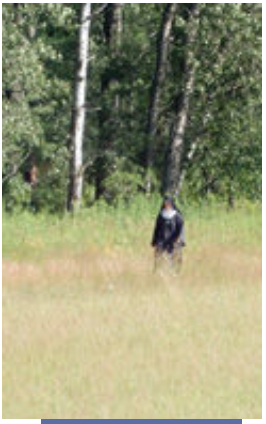

Ordinary Choices

"I have come to set fire to the earth". In the middle of ordinary time comes this declaration about urgency, mission, and expectations. The first disciples of Jesus came in contact with his urgency and passion for God's kingdom and, through His Spirit, it turned their world upside-down. They in turn went out and set fire to the world. This cost them everything, beginning with their expectations.

When Jesus tells his disciples about the division they will experience because of him, he is not just giving them a weather forecast. As with the admonitions to have no fear and to be vigilant, this warning about the disruptions his presence will provoke, either within themselves or without, comes down to presenting them with the choice that the gospels push before us again and again: anxiety or trust.

This was precisely the choice faced by Mary when presented with Gabriel's startling message. Yet this is also the most ordinary choice that all of us deal with, and we deal with it over and over, in ways enormous and miniscule and every size in between. We can, and so often do, live on a yo-yo of anxiety-or-trust.

The division we experience, especially within ourselves, is not a matter of our rightness versus others' wrongness, but a sign of both our real lack of control and how our transformation in Christ sets us at odds with the belief in power and control that is the false

The Order of Julian of Norwich

is a contemplative Order of monks and nuns in the Episcopal Church. Our aim is to help renew the spiritual life of the Church in three ways: by serving as a witness of the contemplative monastic tradition in the Episcopal Church, second by supporting a vibrant community of Oblates and Associates 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.**

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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peace of the world, and which dominated our inner life until the coming of Christ.

This belief that we are in control of our world, personal or otherwise, is both an illusion and a source of immense anxiety, and feeds other fears, one of the deepest being that of belonging or not. The apostles play out this fear over and over: when Jesus makes clear to them who is the greatest in the kingdom of God (it turns out not presently to be any of them) some of them then want to split hairs over who belongs to their fellowship and who is acceptable. But such attempts to claim societal status deny the reality of their own insufficiency. If Jesus were to winnow the disciples according to the model of acceptability they want to use on others, how many would remain at the end of the day? Until they are perfectly like God, every attempt to codify God and his gratuity under laws or within tribes, as if His action could only be defined by human understanding, can only end in the multiplication of their own wrath. It is evidence that on some level, the disciples are willing to sacrifice others to this terrible idol. And yet the Gospel is not about a moral way to live, not a gauge for righteousness. It is about the total failure of all morality to produce righteousness apart from the empty-handed poverty of trust in the righteousness freely given by God.

To live in such trust does not mean being exempt from fear, but it does mean refusing to cultivate it when it comes with its tempting offers of illusory sufficiency, of an exemption from a loss of control that one never actually had to begin with. When Julian wrote, “We do what we can, and humbly ask mercy and grace, and all that we fall short, we shall find in Him”, she was speaking directly to our essential insufficiency, and our need to live in trust.

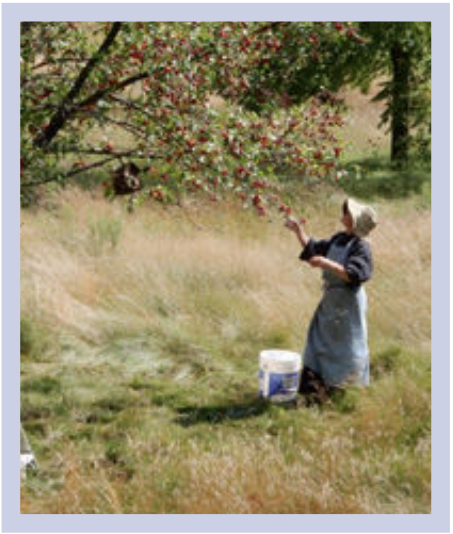
The choice before us is to choose to follow Jesus, and to continue to choose to follow, no matter what comes over the horizon. Today, which is after all the only day we have, we need to decide who we will trust more: ourselves, or God.

A Gratuity of Being

Mthr Hilary OJN

Why are there monasteries, religious orders, and communities of consecrated life? As we are celebrating the thirtieth year of our founding, this is a timely question, and if onlookers to the religious life ever cease to ask it, religious communities themselves never should.

There are many potential answers, most having to do with the initial felt need for gathering a group of people together for a given religious enterprise. Perhaps the impelling organizing vision most responsible for the revival of religious life in the Anglican Communion in the mid-1800's, a little over three hundred years after the Dissolution of the monasteries was the pressing need in England for social services to the sick, the poor, the dispossessed and immigrants, and for the assistance of children, youth, and women at risk. While these new communities (at first almost exclusively of women) had a strong ethos of prayer and worship, the largest part of their ministry was "active"— a word describing the Gospel imperative for serving the least in the name of Jesus: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and burying the dead.



Persevering through what was often significant persecution, these communities were eventually accepted as legitimate, even indispensible ministries in the Church largely because of the social services provided to those who would otherwise have gone without. That perseverance prepared the ground for the resurgence of older communities whose use to larger society was not so

immediately apparent as well as for the origination of whole new forms of religious life.

Besides the provision of social or pastoral services, in our time there are any number of reasons for bringing communities into being. Sometimes the principal compelling vision is the desire for stable community life itself. Fractured families, a high degree of geographical mobility, an occupational environment where, possibly for the first time ever in respect to the workplace "there is no 'there' there"— despite greater and greater degrees of virtual connectivity, all these have conspired to increase an already widespread sense of personal disconnection and dislocation.

Religious life among twentieth century Anglicans also coalesced around of the old institution of artisans' guilds — mutual societies of musicians or liturgists, for instance; while other communities formed to supply for a perceived dearth of spiritual, devotional, or liturgical literacy in the Church, or to promote the cause or patronage of a particular saint.

But whatever the reasons a given community may have come into being, whatever its founding vision or purpose — these fall into the category of "accidence" rather than "substance". The particular kind of work or service, the particular devotional style or spiritual ethos of a given community is, in the end, not what lies at its heart.

Before any notion of function, the original animating spark of a community can only be the desire of Jesus to bring such a body into being in response to his own love working its way through the world. As the psalmist says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, their labor is in vain

who build it." In the end, there are no founders with the strength of knowledge, ability, experience, celebrity or sheer strength of personality to ensure the continuance of their religious orders if their founding was not, in however inchoate or imperfect a way, a response to to the love of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. St Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, and equally to us, "Consider your own call, brothers and sisters; not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...so that no one might boast in the presence of God."

What is at work in the shaping of communities as a whole is also at work in the development of each individual member of them, and vice versa. Whatever initially attracts a person to a given community — the particular kind of work or service it carries out, its devotional and spiritual life — is mostly just the envelope around the real invitation Jesus is holding out. What got many of us here isn't always, in the end, the thing that sustains our vision and keeps us here. T. S. Eliot describes this dynamic well in his poem *Little Gidding*: "And what you thought you came for/ Is only a shell, a husk of meaning/ From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled/ If at all. Either you had no purpose/

Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured/ And is altered in fulfillment." And the imperative intent of the love of Jesus may also work to shape the larger community's life in a way its founder or first members had not foreseen or expected, just as happened with the first Christians.

Whatever degree of usefulness to the Church or to society a religious community may apparently have, the real foundation for its existence lies in its response to Jesus who is continually drawing it and each of its members to himself. Love has a logic that utility cannot fathom. (This may partly explain why, for instance, commentaries and sermons on the *Song of Songs* proliferated in the time of the great Benedictine reforms of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.) In the end, a religious community's life is secured not simply by sheer intensity of effort, nor skillfully crafted program, nor by carefully controlled release of proprietary knowledge, but by the desire of the Holy Spirit bearing fruit in corporately faithful response.

Why are there monasteries, religious orders and communities of consecrated life? Because to imperatively, concretely, draw small groups of people in every time and place to "go and sell all they have, give it away to the poor and follow him" is one of the ways Jesus woos the entire Church, and in times of complexity and confusion reminds it of its first love.

Energy Efficiency, Design, & Sustainability

Mark Klein
Gimme Shelter Construction

Because our guesthouse project involves a different kind of design and construction from previous building projects, we invited our General Contractor to say a few words about the process.

The Guesthouse Wing for the Order provides an opportunity to consider the integration of energy efficiency, design and sustainability in the context of contemporary understanding of building science and environmental awareness.

Energy Efficiency is a baseline expectation for us. The design process begins with an understanding of the value of simplicity as a design concept. When we create simple somewhat rectangular shapes on an east west axis we are responding to our climate and our seasonal exposure to the solar cycle. We can favor south facing windows for their day lighting, ventilation and views and offset their relatively poor thermal performance with the thermal gain they provide during our heating season. In the case of the Guest House Wing we were able to position the structure so that we could place the majority of the window glazing facing to the south looking toward the south and west fields.

Sustainability is a concept that can have many levels of understanding. First we want to create safe and healthy environments. This means ensuring that the inhabitants have adequate and efficient ventilation and that we choose materials and finishes that have low or no volatile organic compounds (VOC). In the case of the Guesthouse we will be using heat recovery ventilation (HRV) a strategy in which heat or cold is extracted from exhaust air and is used to temper incoming air. We will use hard surface flooring rather than carpeting and low or no VOC finishes and materials. Next, we want to build buildings that are emotionally satisfying. We increase the chances that these buildings will be long-lived and will thereby help justify the resources consumed in

their construction, when we create buildings that provide pleasure for the inhabitants. We also consider the environmental impact of the materials we use, for example, we favor cellulose insulation in the walls and ceilings and EPS foam subslab because of the low global warming impact and high performance profiles of these products compared with extruded or sprayed foam or fiberglass. The Guesthouse walls, floors and roof will be sheathed in native white pine lumber provided by the incredible 100-year-old sustainable forestry efforts of Menominee Tribal Enterprises. We choose this material not only for its sustainable source but for its high level of durability when we compare it to typical modern choices of manufactured sheet goods like OSB or plywood. Other material and finish choices we will use that are driven by that mix of environmental impact and durability, sometimes referred to as Life Cycle assessment, are Standing Seam steel roofs, FiberCement Siding and Thin Coat Plaster.

The use of plaster on the interior walls will also obviate the need for paint. The guesthouse will include a small wood-burning stove for winter heat, and on the monastery side, a masonry heater. Both of these will make use of the firewood we can collect on our land and limit the amount of propane and electricity needed for the winter months.

Menominee Tribal Enterprises, with all of their timber, is located in the county immediately to the south of us.

Julian's Notebook

Reflections on the *Revelations*

"Nothing is done by luck or by chance but everything by the foreseeing wisdom of God." This sentence from Chapter 11 of the *Revelations* is one of the sentences offered for the lection at Midday Prayer. It is comforting to think about if one mulls over the events of one's own life — even the very uncomfortable memories can be seen to have brought worthwhile changes over time.

The observation sets Julian off in her wondering of "what about sin". If God does everything, how could there even be sin, because, as Julian acknowledges, God "is the midpoint of everything and He does everything, and I was certain He does no sin. And here I saw truthfully that sin is no deed, for in all this revelation sin was not shown." Julian accepts that God does nothing but good, but the tension of that acceptance with the events which humankind does in the world — or the natural disasters which seem to have no purpose behind them — is more than she can fathom. Humankind's wrongdoing, so constant in its occurrence, can't be ignored. She beseeches God to explain the quandary about "sin" but He answers: "See, I am God. See, I am in everything. See, I do everything. See, I never lift my hands from my works, nor ever shall, without end. See, I lead everything to the end I ordained for it from without beginning by the same power, wisdom and love with which I made it. How would anything be amiss?"

We have a choice as to our response to this powerful statement. We can continue to agonize over the patent incongruity between human sin and divine sufficiency and goodness, or commit ourselves in trust to the wisdom infinitely greater than our own. Julian concludes (eventually) that such agonizing is much better done without, and that our own trust in God's goodness will actually ripple out to help the whole creation. It is not an easy choice, and she recognizes the difficulty. Sometimes the most we can do is will to accept the suffering attendant on our inability to either understand or trust, and yet this, as poor as it seems, is the beginning of trust, and of the change that will ultimately create in us the trust and peace we long for.

Community Notes

It has been a whole year since our great adventure of relocating; we feel we have been here much longer and are immensely content. It has been a good summer in the midst of a very busy year. As this goes to press the guesthouse is at last in the initial phase of construction—ordering parts and material. While we have not yet reached our goal of raising a quarter of the funds needed, we have approval from the bank to proceed and are doing so in the faith that God will provide. We expect groundbreaking to take place within the next several weeks, and the project possibly to be complete by summer 2017. In the interim, if you wish to come up and visit with us, the best place to stay is a mile down the road at Bear Paw resort, where cabins are available.

As a kind of prelude to the months of noise ahead, and to help a little with the costs, we have had some selective logging done in our woods. Karl (the farmer renting our field, p 5) has got in the hay for the summer. Inside the monastery itself, we are finally working to put up walls in the office and some cells, where we have been dividing rooms with curtains and sheets for several months.

The garden (inside cover and back) has done better than we expected so far — everything is growing mightily and might even bear fruit before winter. Our neighbours press produce on us and we have enjoyed lots of corn and that perennial Wisconsin summer gift, zucchini.After several months of slowly settling in, we have got the soapshop up and running again, and soap will be back in Julian Shop this fall. Prayer benches are not too far behind. Rosaries are also back in the Shop and are offered in glass, wood, and stone.

The Book Note will return in the fall.

Clockwise from the top: A logging truck taking some of our former trees away. • Our contractor with the guesthouse plans. • New soaps set out for drying.

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