A Note from the Guardian

Some thirty years ago as I was discovering the riches of the Book of Common Prayer I made it a practice to pray the Great Litany once a week or so (BCP 1979, page 148). In that time of prosperity and national hope many of the biddings in the litany seemed quaintly antiquated, even medieval, far removed from my comfortable suburban existence.

Thirty years on those same biddings, once impossibly remote are suddenly salient, the stuff of front page newspaper headlines—"from earthquake, fire, and flood; from plague, pestilence, and famine...from violence, battle, and murder; and from dying suddenly and unprepared...Good Lord, deliver us."

The Litany retains its power not because God is wrathful and changeable and must be soothed with constant cringing attention, but because we ourselves are wrathful and changeable. Prayer is not for God's adjustment and improvement but for ours, and the Litany makes for an excellent and thorough examination of conscience. Praying it we are brought home to the fact that we are friable, and far from the constancy of God's love and mercy; the Litany not only comforts and strengthens, but gives us a map of what to grow toward.

For we pray in trust to God whom Julian calls our Maker, our Lover and our Keeper and who holds all things in being by the strength of love alone. May our prayer be a practice at, and a foretaste of this love and mercy we ourselves are to come to embody. In that hope, the monks and nuns of the Order of Julian of Norwich bid you a blessed feast of Christmas, the advent of the One who embodied God's love for us.

Yours in Jesus and Julian,

M. Hilary, OJN

Guardian of the Order

Compassionate love for enemies is the only reliable criterion of truth.

St Silouan of Athos

The Order of Julian of Norwich is a contemplative monastic Order of monks and nuns of the Episcopal Church.

Our widespread community of Oblates and Associates, of diverse Christian denominations, is committed to prayer, intercession, and conversion of life, supported by Julian's teaching of God's love for us in Christ Jesus.

Come and see!

www.orderofjulian.org

Julian's Window

Volume IX • December 2017 • No. 4

the newsletter of the Order of Julian of Norwich

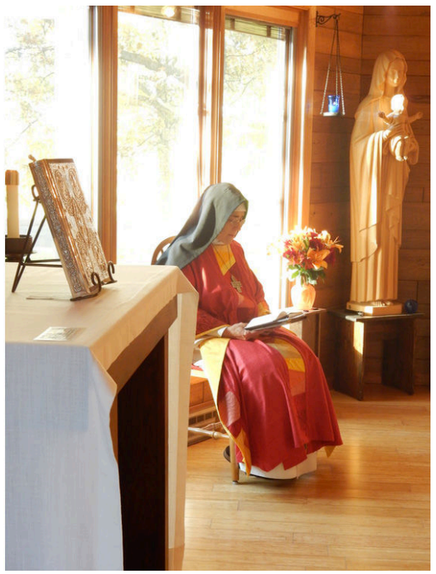
Electronic Address Service Requested

Our Lady of the Northwoods Monastery
The Order of Julian of Norwich
W704 Alft Rd
White Lake WI 54491-9715
USA

Community Notes

While we did not get more than 73% solar eclipse this past August, we nonetheless had one of the few patches of clear sky over northern Wisconsin on that day, so we got to take a peek through our homemade telescope.

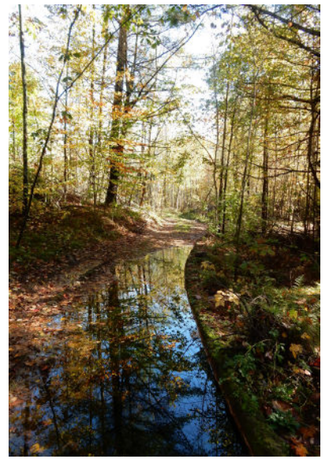
September will be remembered as a month of irregular weather after an irregular summer—too cool, then too hot. Much of the outdoor work has been finishing up the landscaping around the guesthouse, and attending to the mountain of firewood logs left by the loggers. Bishop Jacobus and his wife Jeri came by with a gas splitter and helped us start on the pile, and other friends have come to help with axes and chainsaws. Though the going is slow our manual splitter has turned out a few cords of split wood already. All of this wood will take a year to season and should be ready to use in our heater next winter.



Two years after moving here, we are not quite done with the library, but we are done with guest accommodations. This fall we began to receive guests again after a long hiatus. If you are interested in coming on retreat, send a form from our website Contact page and we will let you know what is available.

Our seasons here are told by the migrating birds as much as by the trees, the temperature, and the liturgy. The last wave of bluebirds, robins, and juncos have passed through and the woods will be fairly quiet until spring. By the time you receive this issue the land may well look like the snowy picture on the back cover. Winter feels like it is coming very quickly, and we expect a snowy November and Advent. You are all in our prayer for a peaceful and holy Christmas.

Fourteen years after her death, we still remember Sr Scholastica Marie for her gentle wisdom and compassionate challenge to fear and angst. In 1998, addressing the grief caused by decisions at Lambeth, she wisely wrote: "In silence, we have to trace the attitudes within us that cause our hearts to shrink. In solitude, we have to come face to face with our fears and then we are caught in the gaze of God. It is God's eye which looks at us and compels us to go within to see if we can observe what God sees. In the eye of a storm, in solitude, God's eye directs our view not only to our fears and flaws, but more essentially to our gifts and dreams. So we can embrace what it means to be human: to be made in God's image while being vulnerable, fragile, and fearful." For Sr Scholastica Marie, no issue was ever a matter of the wrong of others, but of what brokeness in our hearts God means to convert to his love, that opens us to His compassionate healing.



Clockwise from top left: Bishop Jacobus and Mthr Hilary splitting wood • One of the wood piles • Sr Therese and Associate Fr Rod splitting wood • A road in the woods flooded by rains • An occasional local: Dryocopus pileatus • A quiet moment at Eucharist

Julian Shop: prayer benches, pocket rosaries, soap

If you are looking for small, quality gifts for Christmas, visit our online Shop! We make sturdy knotted pocket rosaries, with beads of stone, wood, or glass: forest green seraphinite, dove blue angelite, salmon coral, peach sunstone, tiger ebony, olive wood, rosewood, sea-blue glass, just to name a few.

Our unscented castile soap is perfect for those who wish to avoid strong fragrances and comes in five varieties: traditional olive oil, plain coconut, olive-coconut, goat's milk & honey, and birch. These sell fast so check with our Shop for availability.

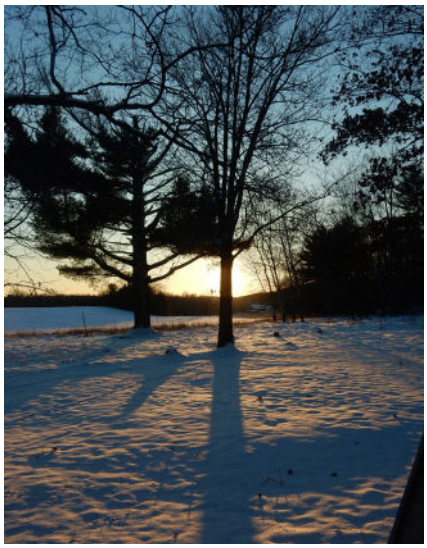
The Eye of the Beholder

Mthr Hilary OJN

Just recently on the feast of St Michael and All Angels, we met Jacob in the wilderness on his journey out from Canaan, heading east, seeking a wife and a fortune. After his mysterious dream of angels at Bethel, the gate of heaven, Jacob said to God, "If you bless me, I'll be faithful."

Later, we meet Jacob at his return to Canaan. He is well married, certainly, and quite rich, but a changed man for all that. For he has seen himself and his past dealings with the eye of truth, and understands that his brother Esau has a legitimate grievance against him. Once the man whose dealings with God were conditional, Jacob now says, "I am not worthy of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness you have shown your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies." Jacob has come face to face with God; he has also come face to face with the truth of himself. Woven through all the stories on this feast is the idea of judgment, and truth telling.

By our baptismal vows, we have sent everything we have over the river, cast our whole lot onto the mercy and love of God, and have been charged by God to persevere in these vows until the end. And as surely as Jacob met the truth of himself at the Jordan River, we do as well.



Whether we come to the community of the monastery, or to communities of spouse and children, we find that, besides gaining a fortune of the heart, far from escaping the conflict and un-peace of the world, we find them still with us. They come in with us, for they are part and parcel of our own selves. Close community life doesn't rescue us from our own un-peace but does clear a space where we may wrestle with it effectively.

And we are given a lot of help. Any reasonably stable community functions as a roomful of mirrors, both in its practices and customs and in its personnel, and in these mirrors the Holy Spirit is all the time showing us ourselves, and the truth of ourselves, things that are good and beautiful together with things that are not. This inescapable element of community life can either be the gateway to heaven, or it can be hell.

The difference is made by the eye with which we choose to look into these mirrors. Julian tells us that because of our changeable nature we look at our world and others in it with what she calls the "lower judgment" which is muddled. Sometimes, she says, this judgment is good and gentle, participating in God's rightfulness, and other times it is cruel and oppressive. If we look into these communal mirrors with the eye of denial and throw stones at them for offending our sensibilities, it is likely we will simply prolong our own agony. But if we persevere at facing the truth of ourselves, regarding what we see with the eye of God's higher, all-merciful judgment, then the kingdom of God will have begun to take root in us; our community will have become the gate of heaven.

Faith the size of hope

Sr Therese OJN

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap Jesus in his words.... "Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth, you aren't swayed by others.... Tell us, is it right to pay the imperial tax?"

Matthew 22.15-22

This small incident, which brings to the surface petty internecine squabbles as much as larger political realities, is on the face of it almost farcical. The inclusion of the Herodians in the audience, which may have seemed like a brilliant tactical gesture, ends up looking disingenuous, if not ludicrous, as the disciples of the Pharisees state their case: "Teacher, take responsibility for our political actions, so that you can catch it if the emperor finds them disagreeable." And they are dim enough to be surprised when Jesus is not taken in: "Have you no minds of your own? Your acts of civil disobedience are your own to choose. You are not even my followers. Can your teachers not judge for themselves what is required?"

Certainly Jesus's own followers could bear in mind the need to render to God what belongs to God. But what doesn't belong to God? Is there one minute, one second, that does not? Do the disciples have anything that is not lavishly and freely granted to them?

But all this is not really the point. Beneath concerns about who has ownership of what and what should be done with things, there is the problem of creativity and imagination, which is at bottom an issue of trust. The Pharisees have already decided that there are only so many ways, all equally damning, Jesus can answer their question, just as they had previously feared there were only so many ways, all equally damning, they could answer his. As with that question, their conception of what is possible is limited both by the approval or disapproval of others, what exalts or abases them before their audience, and by the limit of their understanding. It represents a faith only as large as what they understand and that is lavish primarily with calculation, one that has become concerned chiefly with control and manipulation.

This is not a faith that represents very much hope—apparently nothing much larger than certain predetermined outcomes for security and coming out on top. It is not a faith prepared to open itself to other possibilities, and its advocates are properly amazed that other possibilities exist. It may be a faith a little less than the size of a mustard seed. Jesus does not condemn such faith—after all it can grow—but he doesn't commend it, either. He will ask of his disciples a trust that is far more searching and exposing, a faith that believes all things are possible, that never pauses to judge or condemn others, that fears nothing and hopes everything. And it will be far more costly than merely disposing to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.