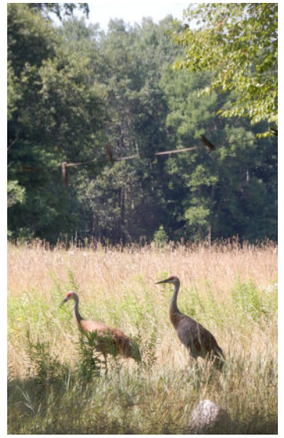
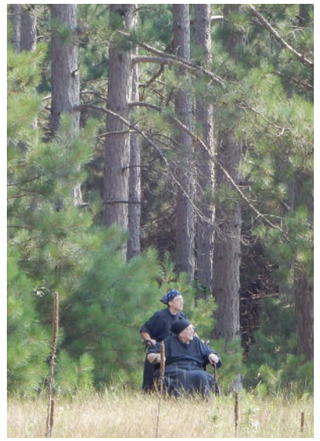
A Note from the Guardian

With this issue of *Julian's Window* we mark the first full year after the blessing of our guesthouse and monastery, and come around again to the feast of Our Lady St. Mary, for whom the monastery is named.

It is a traditional practice in many, if not most monastic houses to sing an 'antiphon' in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the close of the office of Compline, the last prayers of the day. The antiphon and accompanying collect vary by season, and the collect for Ordinary time begins with this line: *"Almighty and everlasting God, who by the power of the Holy Spirit prepared the body and soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary to become a habitation for your Son…"*



As we sang that line this week it occurred to me that it sums up in admirably succinct form the most important project Christians are all engaged in, becoming, body and soul, a habitation fit for Jesus, a human place responsive to and ready to requite the audacious hospitality of God, who for us became us. This has consequences. The breaking in of another life rearranges things, stretches things, calls out complacencies, puts a finger on all our selfishness, and fiercely questions the hegemony of convenience. And wait, there's more. The project of becoming a habitation fit for Jesus requires that we look for, welcome, and love Jesus in the person of everyone we encounter in our daily life: our families and friends, our guests and neighbors, anyone with whom we may interact of whatever kin or kind, status or persuasion. Loving God, being hospitable to the in-breaking of God is inseparable from the act of loving and welcoming our neighbor. And thanks be to God, this is not a zero-sum proposition.



Yours in Jesus and Julian,

M. Hilary, OJN

Guardian of the Order

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

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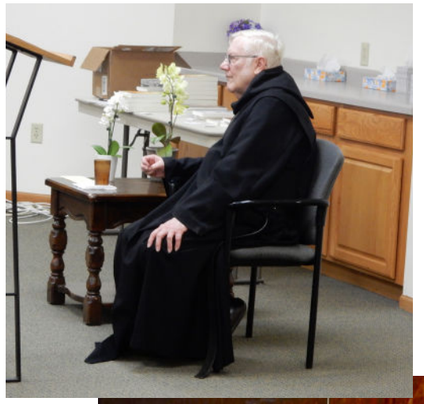
the newsletter of the Order of Julian of Norwich

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



At Julianfest in June, at the Redemptorist Retreat Center in Oconomowoc, we enjoyed a lecture by Abbot Andrew Marr of St Gregory's Abbey, Three Rivers. Abbot Andrew spoke about mimetic resonance in theology, drawing in Julian as a theologian who almost uniquely rises above the cultural currents of her time.

With many of you, our summer temperatures have been above normal, though, unlike our neighbors to the south, Northern Wisconsin continues to receive just enough rain for the present.

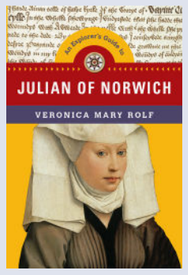
In July Mthr Hilary went to General Convention in Austin, Texas for a few days to help with the booth shared by the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas (CAROA) and the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC) .

Our guesthouse has been busy and we are back to being booked months in advance. Prayer benches are back in production, though because each bench takes up to 10 hours to craft, time for making these is currently limited to a few weeks each year during the warmer months. Most of the summer Sr Therese has been assembling wood in one garage for benches, and chopping wood at the other garage for firewood.

Though we still have no vegetable garden we haven't wanted for produce: our neighbors and friends, who have also been coming to Thursday Eucharists, ensure we lack no zucchini, cucumbers, zucchini, green beans, or zucchini. When we do get a garden, we'll have to grow winter squash.

With continued thanks to all who support us by your prayer and gifts which enable us to be, and to continue our ministries in print and hospitality!

Clockwise from bottom left: Mthr Hilary & Sr Cornelia with a beech (Fagus sylvatica "Roseo-Marginata") planted on the feast of St Mary • Sr Therese sanding a prayer bench • Abbot Andrew OSB at Julianfest • Completed landscaping south of the guesthouse • Prior of Associates Fr Rod Davis with Sr Cornelia • A group of Associates at Julianfest



Veronica Mary Rolf, *An Explorer's Guide to Julian of Norwich*
InterVarsity Press Academic, 220 pp. 2018. ISBN 978-0-8308-5088-4.

In 2013 Veronica Mary Rolf published the long and award-winning book *Julian's Gospel* on Julian and her *Revelations*. Now in 2018 comes *The Explorer's Guide to Julian of Norwich*. A third of the length of Rolf's earlier work, *The Explorer's Guide*, as its title promises, is a guide that surveys Julian, her world, "the historical and theological context" of her text, and gives "a guided tour of Julian's *Revelations*." Two final sections, "Digging Deeper into Julian's Themes" and "A Retreat with Julian's *Revelations*," serve as both a brief scholarly probing and an invitation to the reader's own exploration.

The twofold challenge for any book on Julian that aspires to be more than lightweight and less than a dissertation, is to keep focused on what is relevant and to remain accessible. Rolf succeeds on both counts, sidestepping needless speculation and argument, and employing short sections to explore questions, history, vocabulary, context, and themes. As with books on Julian by Sheila Upjohn, there is a quantity of quality scholarship and reflection packed into less than 250 pages (without the print getting too small). Brisk without being superficial, able to be both precise and penetrating, *The Explorer's Guide* strikes a good balance between heavier, scholarly books on Julian and the popular anthologies of annotated quotes that serve as flash introductions. The reader can return to Julian's own text without misconceptions, and with deeper appreciation and attention.

Risking real freedom

Mthr Hilary OJN

Today we come upon Jesus back at home, doing his work of healing and casting out demons, and the place is packed. But the hometown headlines are not favorable, not *"Local Boy Makes Good"* but something more like *"Local Boy Feared Deranged—Family in a Panic"*. A confrontation is on the way and because everybody wants in where there's going to be a fight, the scribes come running, saying to Jesus "you have a demon, and by that demon you cast out demons."

But the scribes have walked right into it, enabling Jesus to name out loud the invisible dynamic that has held humanity in thrall almost from its beginning. And Jesus is ready, for he does so clearly, in a wonderful economy of words: "How can Satan cast out Satan?" How can evil cast out evil?

Almost from the beginning, we find the Satan, the Accuser, already hard at work. It all starts with an oblique accusation of God's motives—"Did God say...?"—and the accusations just continue to roll downhill, setting in motion a toxic, deadly but invisible cycle of suspicion, blame, and quite literal cover-up. And humanity has been locked into this cycle of fear and distrust ever since: suspicion, accusation, demonization and expulsion, self-justification—lather, rinse, repeat. Until Jesus came it was a simple, invisible, and devastatingly effective way to run the world. *"It's those idiot _____ . If only we rid the place of them, everything would be fine."* And this dynamic works intra-personally equally well: Is there a person alive who has not said at one time or another, *"If only I weren't so _____ I'd be fine."* Since Jesus revealed the wizard behind the works, the dynamic doesn't work so well anymore, but not for lack of trying. If you want to know who is the demon du jour, just check any recent newspaper for the menu.

So back to the gospel. Jesus is here throwing everything into confusion, questioning the assumptions we have always made about the way the world works, giving us to know we don't have to live that way anymore. But we like it. It's familiar. As free as we could be, this is why we are resistant to the Gospel: It is painful to question why we do what we do, especially when we feel we have good reasons for doing it.

But to question ourselves is the heart of the way of conversion. Two things the practices of the religious life are all about: first, to get your mind and your heart squarely back into your body—get the human organism functioning as one coherent whole—and second, getting you to question your assumptions about the way the world works and why. Jesus says you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. This freedom is the reason for the mercy of community life. It is why we risk life amongst a people who could really know us, and from whom we would not try to hide. This freedom is why we have the mercy of confession and absolution. It is why we have the mercy of the Holy Spirit coming along at intervals to whip the tablecloth of what we call normal out from under all the dishes.

This freedom is why we say yes to the work that Jesus is doing, however naked and exposed it sometimes makes us feel. We have met the accuser, and he is us. Julian models for us the very process of conversion, allowing herself to be faced, to be seen and known and loved by Jesus crucified, and allowing Jesus to question all her assumptions about the life of faith, and the way the world works.

So let us take up this way of the Gospel with both hands. Let us all go back to our homes today and dare to risk the headline, *"Local Folk Feared Deranged"*.

Thoughts on Centering Clay as a Spiritual practice

The Rev Holly Ratcliffe ObJN

Working with clay on a wheel is a craft that almost every human culture has developed in its history. It may be seen simply as a response to a utilitarian need, given that every society uses round, fired clay objects for eating, cooking and containing food and drink. But the work of centering, in certain cultures anyway, has been considered a spiritual practice. What is centering? It is the throwing or turning of clay on the head of a wheel such that the hump of clay becomes and remains completely centered under the hand of the potter throughout the process of fabricating the object. It looks so simple, if one is watching a master potter do it. But try it! It is not so obviously easy. One is immediately faced with a material that has its own will.

Centering demands a certain physical stamina. If one is throwing for hours at a time, it is important to keep a straight and yet relaxed posture, as if one were being held by a thread from one's head. If not, over the long haul one will be plagued by muscular problems due to bad postural habits. As well, it is necessary to breathe regularly throughout the whole process. I remember well when a teacher pointed at an irregularity in the side of my pot and said "you forgot to breathe there!" Good posture and breathing are both essential to making good pots, and also to practicing good spiritual exercises.

This observation I received from that teacher leads to the second point I want to make, which is that centering clay leads to greater self mastery. I believe the potter engages in a mirroring activity when throwing: centering the clay, or not being able to centre the clay, gives feedback about the potter's interior state. For example, if the clay seems to refuse to submit under the hand of the potter, it may well be acting as a mirror, reflecting back something going on in the person. The tendency to apply sheer force on the part of the potter's hand will not lead to success. That "force" will simply be reflected back in any number of unwanted ways. Over time, people who throw clay recognize that the clay is giving feedback about the will of the hand which is upon it, and tend less and less to blame their environment for whatever is going wrong. This is also the case with people who have spiritual disciplines that engage the mirroring dynamic in other ways. In the end, like any other practice that engages one's interiority in ways that are not self-deceptive, it is the regular act of practicing makes all the difference. If one is not regularly centering clay on the wheel, one will not see results in one's life. On the other hand, if one practices daily, one may well see the fruits of this in surprisingly beautiful ways in one's life, as well as in one's ceramic creations!

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