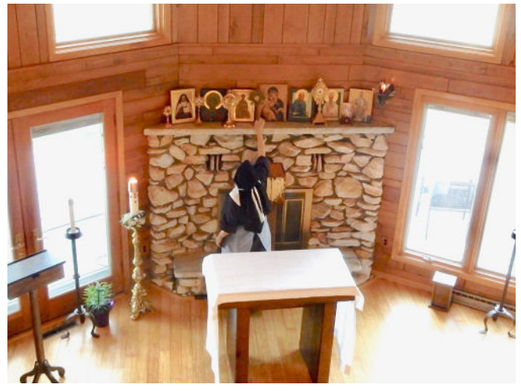
A Note from the Guardian

As I write this, Eastertide has come to a close, and the woods are filling in again with new leaves greening the trees and trilliums starring the ground beneath them. The swifts are back home in the chimney, and tulips and daffodils are blooming around the house. All these are obeying a summons toward life that challenges a purely horizontal view of the world where bad news fascinates and the sensational sells the papers.

For "twenty years, short three months" Julian of Norwich wrestled with the insoluble question of why God allowed sin to come into the world. For an answer after all that time, Jesus's direction to Julian was to go back and meditate carefully on the picture-parable he had shown her in revelation so many years before, that of a lord whose beloved servant has fallen into a deep ditch. As Julian did so, her understanding of the parable was enlarged, illumined, and clarified, much as were the minds of the two disciples encountering the unknown man on the road to Emmaus, and no strangers were they to the Scriptures, either.



The substance of Jesus's answer to both was this: neither to Julian's fallen servant nor to those to whom the Scriptures came bodily does God assign any manner of blame, but only the all-knowing, piercing, cleansing, forgiving regard of love, with peace. Reading the scriptures of word and sacrament, of fields and woods, let us look up, take hope for ourselves and for our world, and may our own feet be guided into the way of peace.

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.orderofjjulian.org

Julian's Window

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the newsletter of the Order of Julian of Norwich

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Community Notes

• Many of Br Barnabas's relatives and friends were able to come to his funeral in early March, despite a recent snowstorm.

• We had a long winter he would have enjoyed, concluding with a blizzard in mid-April. This was severe enough that even the highway department was overwhelmed. Nonetheless, no sooner was the blizzard "over" than M Hilary was off to Toronto for the annual CAROA meeting of religious superiors. By the time she arrived back a week later most of the two feet of snow had melted and temperatures were warming.

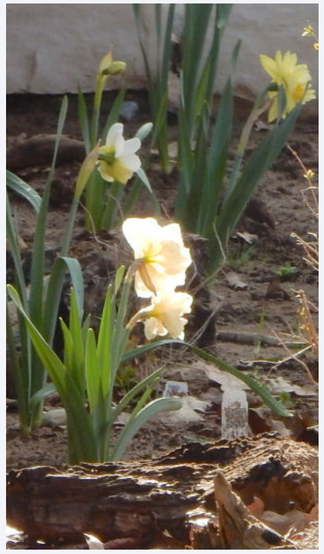
• Last year, spring was slow and leisurely and lasted for a few weeks in April and May, but due to the extended cold this spring, the snow did not leave us until late April and the tulips were still coming out in early June. We have been keeping closer track of when the birds come back; with the arrival of the swifts, hermit thrushes, and whippoorwills, we know winter is really over.

Clockwise from left: Patrick and Mthr Hilary discussing the new soap forms • Sr Therese, snowblower • Clearing rocks and roots in preparation for new plants

• Annual General Chapter was held in early May, just before Julian's Day. The celebrations for the day included Sr Cornelia's presentation of a reflection on Julian's prayer, which is printed in this issue.

• After a few years of production our initial soap molds are becoming deformed. One of our neighbors is building new molds for us in a sturdier version and we hope to have them producing this summer. Looking ahead our soap will be sold through Monastery Greetings and should be available on their site by next winter.

• Guests, including a vocational observer, continue to come and fill our two available rooms. If you plan to come on retreat, be sure to check a few months in advance.



You were remembered with joy & thanksgiving in a novena of Masses beginning on Saint Julian's day, 8 May

Update on guesthouse funds:

Thanks to many small gifts and a few large ones we are up to $40,000 in our goal of $90,000 for the guesthouse.

Once this goal has been reached, we will begin to focus on funds for the remainder of the mortgage.

From the Refectory, 2017-2018:

Mimetic Theory & Biblical Interpretation	Michael Hardin
Threads from our Tapestry: Benedictine Women in Central Minnesota	Imogene Blatz OSB & Alard Zimmer OSB
Articles from Winter 2018 Anglican Theological Review: The Gift of Water	
Meeting God in Mark	Rowan Williams
The Hidden Life of Trees	Peter Wohlleben

"God of your goodness": Julian's prayer in the First Revelation

Sr Cornelia OJN

> God, of thy goodness geve me thyselfe. For thou art inough to me, and I may aske nothing that is lesse that may be full worshippe to thee. And if I aske anything that is lesse, ever me wanteth. But only in thee I have all.
>
> Watson & Jenkins, ME edition of *Revelations of Divine Love*

It is interesting that Julian's Prayer appears so early in *Revelations of Divine Love* (Chapter 5). The Prayer isn't in the Short Text, so it is a composition from those long years of meditating on God's love of us (despite our sinning) and on the parable of the Lord and the Servant. It was while she waited all those years pondering the meaning of the parable that she found the words for "God, of your goodness." The Prayer may have had on-going versions and what if our Lord had a hand in *its* composition, just as He had with her understanding of the parable! Julian does not "*write down*" for her evenchristens in the Prayer, but rather writes in such a way that her theology could "be listened to but not understood, be looked at but not perceived" and yet even so would touch them with an inward comprehension.

Is there a brief preview of Julian's Prayer at the beginning of *Revelations*, in the first two of her three requests to God? The first two requests (a deeper knowledge of the Passion and a severe bodily illness) were, Julian realized, perhaps a bit excessive. So she prays to the Lord in apology, ending her prayer with the words "I want nothing but what you want." Might that be a glimmer of her famous prayer?

Julian knows that the Lord has pleasure when a soul comes to him plainly and simply; and she knows that it is also the natural yearning of the soul to do so. Realizing this reciprocity, Julian feels that she has been given a carte blanche to talk deeply with God — and she takes advantage of this holy gift. In her prayers she expresses confidence that God will listen to her. And so he does. But as her Maker and Keeper, he doesn't always think her comments and requests appropriate. Julian goes on and on about sin and how the Lord could have made the world better if he had "letted sin." It's a hope that she won't give up on and it earns her some kindly rebukes. But, ah:

that opens up for her a theological point of view and she begins to sort it all out.

As her *evencristens*, we try to make our prayer like Julian's. We may not put it into endearing words as she did. We may just sit like the parched earth waiting for the rain to fall (as Br. Roger of Taizé said). Our Rule of Life requires us to sit like that for at least one hour a day. But sixty minutes is not very long, and our whole life—whether in the chapel, at the kitchen stove, with the database, or out in the garden with a spade—needs to be grounded by on-going silent prayer.

During her life in the anchorhold, Julian would take care that her every moment was grounded in prayer. Perhaps her Rule of Life required her to say each day just so many Hail Mary's, Our Father's, and Glory Be's. But such vocal prayer would have had some practical implications. Spoken Middle English is much slower than spoken Modern English and if Julian had read something aloud, it would have been a time-consuming process. (How modern the negative concept of "time-consuming" is! Would it have made any sense to Julian?) Writing and reading aloud in Middle English "held inside its informal grammatical uses and the constant 'thingness' of its word choices the thoughts and feelings of the vast unlettered majority" (Watson & Jenkins, p. 26). The "vast unlettered majority" being, that is, Julian's "evenchristens"— beloved, if unlettered, to Julian who is actually quite lettered (though she claims not to be).

Think about Julian's Prayer for a moment: we speak to God himself and tell him we recognize his goodness. We ask him to give himself to us no matter how odd or unsatisfactory we might be at any time. Nor do we think of him as an angry God out to punish us for our occasional ornery-ishness. We tell him that *he* is exactly what we want, and he is *enough*. We know without a doubt that he is just right for us and will help us. And so we make Julian's confidence and delight in God our own—and as well, her self-gift of a life dedicated to Him alone.

God, of your goodness. . .