A Note from the Guardian

This issue of Julian's Window is a little different from most: we take up here a discussion of Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* — 'Praise be to you, Lord' — and a monastic response to it.

But isn't this supposed to be a spiritual newsletter? Yes! And because "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" the spiritual embraces and includes the physical, now and for ever. So the things that *Laudato Si'* addresses are not only environmental, even political, but profoundly spiritual. In the beginning God put Adam into the Garden and said to keep it, steward it, use it wisely, love it. We are not separate from the rest of the creatures God has made. Together, we are all "very good."

The very first of the revelations made to Julian of Norwich was a vision of all that was made, all of creation, round as a little ball, and sitting in the palm of her hand. With great apprehension Julian thought that this was so small, so fragile, that it could easily fall to nothing. But, she says, she was answered in her understanding that it lasts and ever shall because God loves it.

In Lent we are invited to consider our living, where and how it accords with love, with the person of Jesus whose Spirit animates us — to see to the things, and the loves, that are out of adjustment and to put them right. *Laudato Si'* invites us to do that on a wider scale, the widest, in fact.

Please also join us in giving thanks for the life and witness of our Brother Barnabas (at right) who died on 10 February.

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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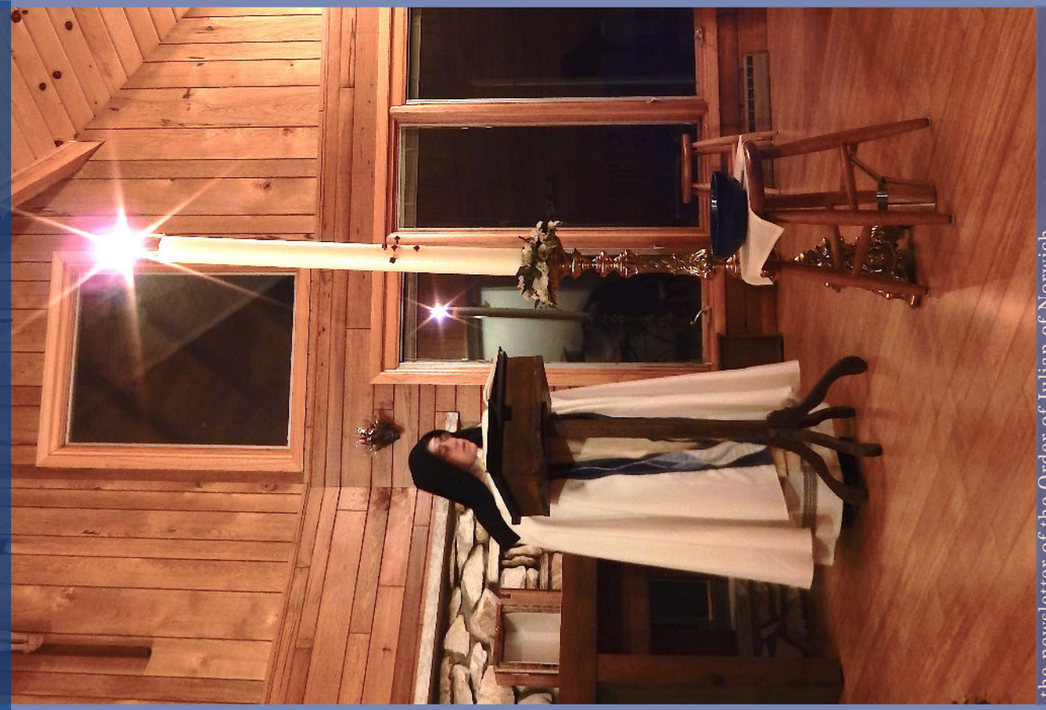
the newsletter of the Order of Julian of Norwich



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

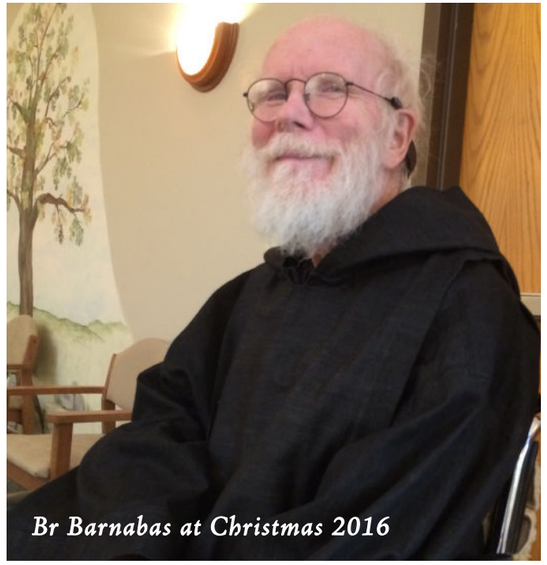
Many of you have been praying specially for Br Barnabas in his struggle with Parkinson's Disease. This January he entered hospice care, and died within a few weeks.

Bruce Leben was born 20 March 1945 in Ohio. He had one brother, Frank, and his family moved to Wisconsin in his early youth. Bruce worked for many years as a psychiatric nurse and raised three children, settling in Michigan. Drawn by the ideal of a life of prayer and study of scripture, and especially by Sr Scholastica Marie's holy example, Bruce entered the Order of Julian, taking the name Barnabas and professing solemn vows in July 2003.

These were years of transition in the Order as we began to develop a more monastic formation. At this time everyone was expected to rotate to all house tasks, and Barnabas worked with cooking, housework, office work, and outdoor work. As an outdoor person he vastly preferred the latter; he was terrified of cooking but with coaching became a fairly creditable cook. He was not skilled with his hands or with writing, but had a native gentleness and at his best was able to deal graciously and compassionately with people, skills that must have helped in nursing. He loved to study different Bible translations; he preferred this to manual labor, but he worked as hard as he was able, often with cards of scriptural quotes in hand which he also liked to give away.

Loving the outdoors, he also loved to walk and once walked from Julian House in eastern WI to Llewelyn House in western WI, a feat which delighted him. Baseball season always found him rooting for the Detroit Tigers.

In his early 60s he began to suffer symptoms of what was later diagnosed as Parkinson's Disease. He loved to drive and contributed greatly with



Br Barnabas at Christmas 2016

long trips when we had Llewelyn House, and it was a particular blow to have to relinquish his driver's license due to increasing infirmity. When the Parkinson's and its complications developed beyond what we were able to provide care for at home, he moved to assisted living, and had to be moved to more than one care facility as the Parkinson's progressed. He always nurtured the hope of coming back to the monastery; while he was well enough, he was able to visit Our Lady of the Northwoods once and was delighted with the setting of woods and fields.

Br Barnabas struggled with adapting to community life and especially the demands of monastic life, which he was not always able to grasp. His religious background never entirely absorbed Episcopalian doctrine and practice. But he loved to pray and to keep long lists of those he prayed for. During his last days he came to a peacefulness that had eluded him for many years. He died quietly on 10 February, the feast of St Scholastica of Nursia. May he rest in peace and rise in glory, Alleluia!

Community Notes

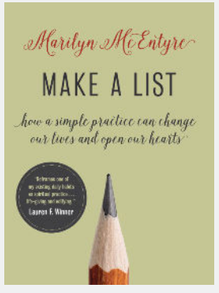
We have welcomed a few guests so far since opening the guesthouse, and neighbors from White Lake have begun to come to Thursday Eucharist. In coming months we anticipate welcoming some inquirers and aspirants.

In November we enjoyed seeing pale white aurora borealis dance over the woods to the north. During October Mthr Hilary attended the Walsingham Festival in Sheboygan, and the Diocesan Convention in Oneida.

Like many across the northern states and Canada, we had impressively frigid temperatures during December, through Christmas, and for weeks in the new year. On 4 February we marked a special event, Sr Cornelia's silver jubilee of life profession, with a small party.

As we were sending out the previous issue of *Julian's Window*, our cat Whitby died at home aged 17 and six months. She is greatly missed and we plan to wait some time before bringing another cat(s) home.

above: Whitby supervising breakfast, 2014
below: Sr Cornelia on the day of her silver jubilee of life profession in February



Make a List: how a simple practice can change our lives and open our hearts.
Marilyn McEntyre
ISBN 978-0-8028-7574-7
Eerdmans 190 pp

Make a list?? Yes! For this is not about lists "to do" but lists "to see by." This little book reintroduces a necessary and mundane task as a practice in awareness, deepening of self-knowledge, and critical thinking — and shows it as creative, enjoyable and richly rewarding. McEntyre considers several possible reasons to make lists and ways to make the most of them, along the way offering brief possibilities of lists (better called launching points) to pursue. *Make a List* is a good book for Lent or any time of searching and digging in one's life, offering frames for naming and knowing those things we frequently miss (or avoid) by not acknowledging them. Stuffed with anecdotes, color, and short reflections, this is a bouquet of practical spiritual exercises posing as something you were going to do anyways.

A Monastic Response to *Laudato Si'*

Last summer the Monastic Institute at Collegeville, Minnesota, which we attended, looked at Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* and possible monastic responses. Here in White Lake we held a few classes of our own to discuss *Laudato Si'* and related issues.

> You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.
>
> **Buckminster Fuller**

What is *Laudato Si'* about?

Though it has been identified as an "environmental" text this is only half the story. Simply put, the issues at hand are peace and justice, and the shape of the future we are creating for our descendants and the entire earth by the systems at play in the present. As EB White wrote over fifty years ago of nuclear threats to global peace and human and environmental health, "what we are really doing is fighting a war that uses the lives of future individuals." In respect to current environmental issues it is also a war that uses the lives of the poorest in the present — and perpetuates poverty for others who are usually not "us" — for the present advantage of many of the rest of us.

None of this is new; leaving aside for the present what is incomplete or unquestioned in *Laudato Si'* (an Anglican religious response two years ago, in typical Anglican fashion, began with identifying such points and arguing them out!) our aim was to look at the essential points of this document and work out a practical response.

For Christians and other people of faith, *Laudato Si'* particularly asks us to live our faith with greater awareness of our place in creation and as members of one human family, in a way that embraces the entire creation and generations to come. In effect, we are asked to change our lifestyles to make a livable future possible for the entire planet: we are tasked with building new models of society, of production, and of consumption. *Laudato Si'* also considers certain ethical implications, in particular allocation of water, food distribution, and just working conditions. There are four main themes:

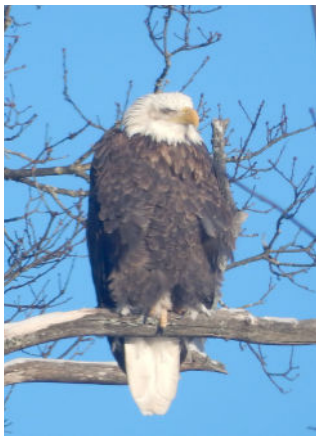
- "Everything is connected to everything else."
- "The environmental crisis is fundamentally a spiritual crisis."
- "Technical solutions are not enough; we need new and different lifestyles."
- "We need to love the earth as a sister, as we do our own homes."

The fact that we live in a country where we can choose to change our models, and not necessarily have change forced on us, means we are also responsible for being aware of the systems we operate within. For to be unaware of these systems is to be complicit in and to accept whatever systems come along, including those instigated by uncontrollable environmental changes.

How can we respond?

Laudato Si' notes that because the challenge is so complex, "strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" (¶139). This challenge is compounded by our being not simply "rational" but emotional beings. Theologian Richard W Miller noted "According to Kari Marie Norgaard's influential work in social psychology…it is the feeling of powerlessness in the face of the overwhelming truth of climate change that generates angst, which 'we are profoundly motivated to avoid.' It is this recoiling from angst that influences our retreat into lived climate denial and 'essentially makes climate change unthinkable.' Since the feeling of powerlessness generates lived denial, the way out of lived denial is empowerment."

The very first choice is awareness. We are not powerless, nor are we irreparably stuck in the systems we use. We can ask ourselves where we have power to effect change, and act on that power. The necessity to take up a "new and different lifestyle" for the sake both of our own future and that of others involves starting to do the usual things differently — to think about the systems we use (to obtain water, to obtain food, fuels and resources, how the needs of the poor are met or not met where we live) and consciously choose to take power to act.



At the Monastic Institute, we identified three levels of action: small and personal (what I can do personally), medium and communal (what my local community does and how I partake in that), and large and expansive (what can be done individually or corporately to provoke change on a larger scale).

These are actions motivated by our faith — specifically, that we are inseparably part of creation, and that the work of contributing to God's kingdom involves building and nurturing community on every possible level. On a human level, such care for each other is perhaps the single most important thing any of us can choose to do.

What can a monastic response be?

A specifically monastic response would be one that is shaped by the mission of a monastery: people called to live the gospel together, and contribute to the kingdom of God, in a particular residential community commited to prophetic witness.

As a community with resources, however few, we are among those who are able to make more choices about changing our lifestyle. This privilege brings with it the responsibility of helping make empowerment possible for those who are most affected by economic, environmental, and social injustice. The prophetic witness of any monastery is tied up in how much it lives the gospel of peace and extends that fellowship to all, one reason why those in monastic communities are called "brother" and "sister." If we wish to have any sort of solidarity with those who are suffering from the systems we depend on, one question we must keep before us, even in our most straitened circumstances is: "are we living too comfortably?" — that is to say, "complacently?"

One way we chose to further our witness was by a community examination of what we purchase and how this affects others: asking questions about our regular expenses, recycling, energy and water use, awareness of the excluded where we live, awareness of the human cost of the products we purchase, and awareness of policies in our state and nation. From this, we were able to make choices: what is the very next thing we can do? Through these choices we form new patterns of choice.

Ultimately a monastery can show that it is possible to live with greater simplicity, generosity, and courtesy, that a "simpler" life is realistic, fulfilling, and can be maintained indefinitely. A monastic response to *Laudato Si'* may be as much about deepening our commitment and witness as intentional and prophetic communities as about specific responses we as communities can make. If we are people of faith, then we can respond in ways of faith and hope, trusting that just as every person matters, so does every effort.

The most important message I can leave you is this: if you want to do something to help the people of Africa, change your lifestyle, influence your politicians, and let us make fighting climate change the highest priority on all of our agendas. Without much more action, the future is bleak, very bleak indeed. We stand at the eleventh hour.

Thabo Makgoba
Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town