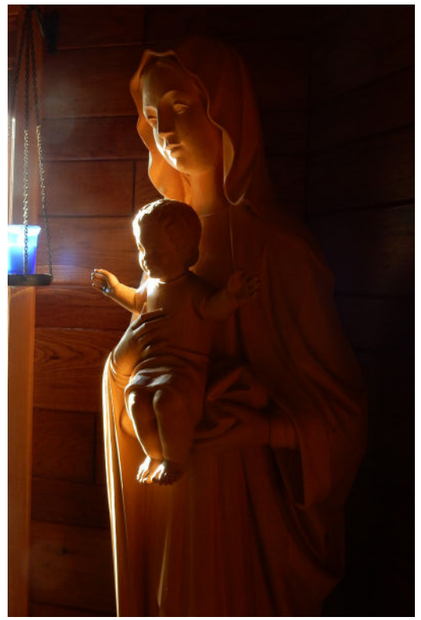
A Note from the Guardian



"Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into human hands." (2 Samuel 24:14)

Every Advent we plumb the unfathomable depths of God's mercy and method, for what David fervently hoped would not happen because of his choice, God freely chose so as to heal the tragic consequences of ours.

For God's love of us, for God's joy in us, for God's patience with us, God the Son freely chose to fall into human hands, to commit to a path of complete vulnerability, and to love us at the closest range possible, come what may. Jesus fell into the hands of Mary his mother and Joseph his foster father, of his friends and relatives and his disciples, and finally, of those who thought him an enemy. For love Jesus gave himself into our hands complete and entire, and for love, continues to do so at our altars to this day.

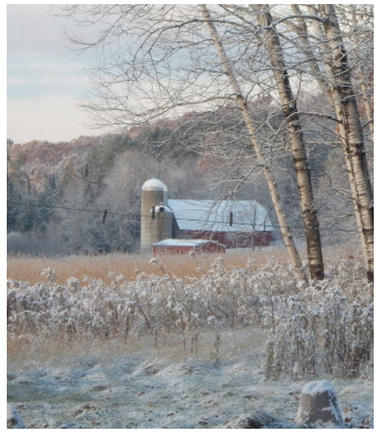
"What we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life...we declare to you" says the apostle John (1 John 1:1,2)

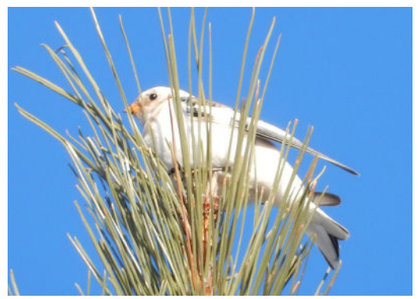
May the peace and joy of this Jesus be with you, and among you, and remain with you this Christmastide and throughout the coming year,

Your sisters and brothers in the Order of Julian of Norwich

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

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The Order of Julian of Norwich
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Community Notes

In a farming community the end of the summer means harvesting, and at present our own crops consist primarily of apples. Perhaps thanks to the bees, this year the "small" (alternate year) apple harvest was a little larger. For the oaks, it has been a mast year and the trees around the garage spent September hailing acorns onto the metal garage roof. After an unsettled summer the weather turned cold and wet that month, before warming again. Unlike last year, this time fall has been more gradual and the cold is arriving later.

This year we held our annual community retreat in September, a time which worked well between other seasonal projects.Our Affiliates Priors' meeting was held here at the monastery in early October. Late in the month Mthr Hilary attended the Diocesan convention in Appleton, which was greatly enlivened by Presiding Bishop Curry and the Way of Love Revival.

Much of our summer was given to a very successful bread season at the Antigo Farmers' Market, but Mthr Hilary was still able to prepare more soap, which is ready for Christmas sales in November, and boxes will also be available through Monastery Greetings. While we often see bald eagles and vultures, an unusual, large visitor this fall was a blue heron that sat on the roof on a foggy day. Our neighbor came over to help with some fall chores, and the beekeeper wrapped up the hives for winter.

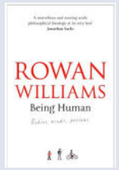
It has now been four years since our move, and two years since the guesthouse was completed; though there are constant jokes about gardening in the forest, the new landscaping is filling in. For our part, we have been surprised and touched by how people in the northwoods and beyond continually discover us in the wilderness, and value our being here. In coming months we look forward to letting you know how we are growing in other ways.

A big thank you to all those who have responded so far to our annual appeal! Your gifts arrived in time for us to overhaul our computer system, a problem which crept up on us this year. The copier, long overdue, is next!

We are grateful for your generous response so far, and encourage you to share our appeal with anyone who might be interested in our work.

A reminder to those who wish to send prayer or mass requests: money is never required for these.

From lower left: Washing the refectory windows; Sr Cornelia typing in the library; a young fir in the National Forest next door



Being Human: Bodies, minds, persons. Rowan Williams. SPCK, pp 117.

ISBN: 978-0-281-07975-9

This deceptively small book contains Rowan Williams at some of his most profound—and, many will be glad to know, also most accessible. His six chapters, addresses given between 2009 and 2015, are tied together by their engagement with the question of what being human is supposed to mean, and outlines "some of the characteristics that we might look for in human lives when they are in touch with...the grace and joy of what is ultimately true"—what truly *human* flourishing and maturity might look like.

Culturally, the model of humanity that directs much education and economy increasingly belongs to a particular corner of the human mind; Williams, like many others, does not believe this is a valid model, but one that runs "the risk of reducing what we mean by knowledge to a certain set of skills and capacities" which discounts time and embodiedness. This is "not simply the risk of a worrying philosophical mistake, but" is in fact "[the] one great intellectual challenge for our day...we are in danger of losing our sense of the human."

Though some answers may be implied this is not a book that tries to supply them, but one that seeks to lay out clearly the cultural models we all participate in at some level, and make explicit some of the questions these models provoke, intending to "help clarify what sort of priorities a Christian might want to have in mind in engaging" with them. If there is no single "coherent model of what sort of humanity we want to nurture in our society"—and if this remains acutely problematic—Christians do have a "coherent model" of humanity in Jesus, a point Williams expands in his last chapter. "Instead of being somebody who needs to be sheltered from the rough truth of the world, the Christian is someone who should be *more* open and *more* vulnerable to that great range of human experience...not in a position to censor out any bits of the human voice." That is, one able to fearlessly model the compassionate humanity at the heart of God.

Expectations

Mthr Hilary OJN

At the beginning of the season of Advent, we hear John the Baptist calling out the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the religious professionals of the day who, among others, are coming to him for baptism: You brood of vipers, he calls them, thundering, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come…Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees" and so on. The one who is to come has his winnowing fork in his hand to separate the wheat from the chaff, and the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire.

It is clear that John expected a Messiah according to the image of wrath, someone of whom a psalmist said, would come and "smash heads over the wide earth." This is something humans can understand, especially those who have been politically, economically, or socially prone and powerless, who long to see their oppressors beaten into impotence and permanent retreat. There is something deeply satisfying about the idea of a hero who will come riding in with flags and trumpets and make everything okay.

As our season of Advent goes on, however, we see that John, confined to prison, begins to wonder whether he had proclaimed the coming of the wrong man. What he said the Messiah would do isn't what Israel seems to be getting.

Then it is the turn of the crowds who had come out to see John in the desert and receive his baptism. Jesus asks them what did they themselves expect of John, and why did they go out to him in the desert? To satisfy curiosity? To have an edgy but safe brush with terror, like going to a horror movie or reading scary fiction? Did they go out to the desert as religious tourists, no consequent obligation arising from what they heard and saw?

Now, that word is addressed to us. What do we ourselves expect? For the religious professionals among us, what did we come to the monastery to see? A live "Brother Cadfael" novel without the unpleasantness of a murder? To have our own ideas baptized about the way the way the world should work, and to be confirmed in our spiritual opinions?

John the Baptist has made no mistake about the man, only about the manner of God's working in the moment. The winnowing fork is in Jesus's hands, but there will most likely be no great conflagration—just an infinite succession of tiny sparks of self-knowledge and holy re-direction. Jesus will lay waste the landscape of our interior wrath with a teaspoon and not a bucket-loader, creating a way by which we can come to him

who is already here, had we but the eyes to recognize him. If we keep to this path with patience, we are assured by the one who sent Jesus that not even fools will go astray.

What is not limited

Sr Therese OJN

Custom and publishers have helpfully titled the encounter of Jesus and the Sadducees "the question about the resurrection" but like many other incidents in the gospels, it is really about another, unstated question entirely: whose side is Jesus on, what ideas or teachings is he going to endorse, should we embrace him or condemn him?

Jesus in the gospels is a lightning rod: the questions he is asked are rarely to do with finding out what he knows and more often to do with defining the comfort zone of his questioners. The unnamed Sadducees may want Jesus to be stymied, or they may want their position to be vindicated; in any event, their question is a model of faith that stops at the limit of one's reasoning and expects, with every confidence, God's power to stop there as well. It is a picture of how even Jesus's disciples so often expect God to be bound by their limitations, to solve problems based on what they can see and not on what God sees, expecting God to see and judge matters according to their own limited vision. The logical consequence of such a faith is that trust, which implies incomplete knowledge, is dismissed as irrational. The disciples are reluctant to admit their knowledge is incomplete, and seldom bother hoping for more.

In chapter 32 Julian writes that "from our point of view" there is so much that is wrong it seems impossible to us that anything could be made well, let alone "all thing". We can become unwilling to believe there is any point of view more complete than our own, which closes us off from learning. Immediately before Julian remarks on the limitations of the point of view of humanity, she describes how, in all being made well, God regards small and large things alike—small and large as they appear to *humanity*—and that "the least little thing shall not be forgotten." Unlike humanity, God does not have a "point of view," a location actual or metaphorical that limits what one is able to perceive; instead God perceives everything and is limited by nothing. Not only is humanity's point of view inadequate, but our sense of scale also leaves much to be desired, if we might consider some things too small to matter or others "large enough" to take pains over. And what we call "least" may well be "greatest" as God knows it.

If Julian was as thorough as possible in raising her doubts and questions to all this, God could certainly not be less so in answering: his reply to *all* "the questions and doubts" that Julian could raise was a fivefold reiteration that he could and would make all things well, and ultimately concluded, "What is impossible for you is not impossible for me." Jesus's answer to the Sadducees makes clear there is so much more to hope for, that God, far from being limited by humanity's understanding, surpasses it beyond measure, and invites them to what they *can* have without limit: a faith, and even a love, just as immeasurable, if they dare.