A Note from the Guardian

In Chapter 15 of the *Revelations*, Julian recounts how in the midst of them she experienced a series of radically alternating states of well-being: at one moment she was lifted to the heights of wellness of soul only to be felled to the depths of depression and near-despair. And then a return again to the heights of bliss. Julian says this alternation went on for some hours, but she could not for the life of her fix the cause of bliss to any intrinsic goodness of her own, nor the near-despair to any consciousness of sins she may have committed.

Julian understood from our Lord that this experience of greatly alternating states was given to her as a teaching, to show that God wills to keep us "full safely" whether we are in well or in woe. God's love for us, in which we are all enclosed, is our unchanging stability whatever our outward circumstances may be.

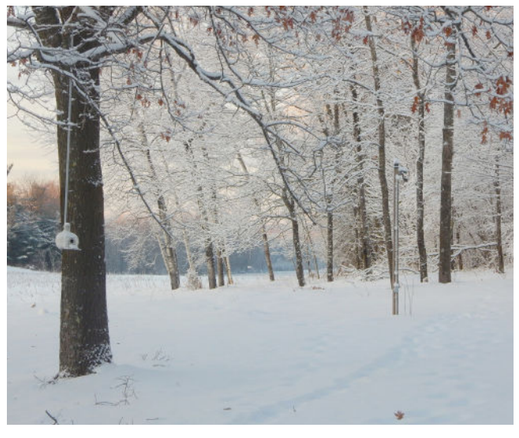
In these uncertain and often frightening times we are to fix our hope, as Julian did, on the fixed reference point of the face of Jesus, he who is peace himself, and is now blissfully resting on the cushion in the midst of our storm-tossed boat. Jesus is the fixed point, the Pole Star, around which the tilting world turns and by which we may navigate into his paths of charity and peace.

This is the Jesus whose coming we await, the gravid and lightsome anchor of the world, whose already-won kingdom shall have no end.

The brothers and sisters of the Order of Julian pray for you a blessed and hope-filled Advent and Christmas season.

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

Volume XII • December 2020 • 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

Our *warmest* gratitude for all your continued love and support, especially to those who have sent donations earmarked for heating expenses.

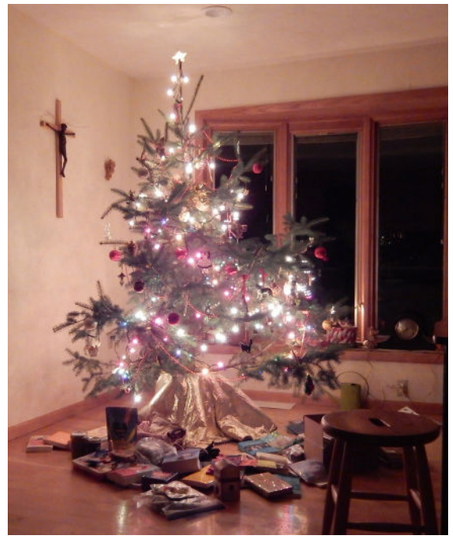
Winter seemed to have started in October with much erratic temperature and a short season of fall color. The first snow came in mid-October and we were surprised by a Michaelmas summer in the first week of November. The apple harvest was small so there was less to freeze for winter, but we are well supplied with much frozen summer fruit.

Work on the Ordo Kalendar has been delayed by other work in the house, but it should still come out before Advent. If you have already ordered one and don't receive one in December, please let us know.

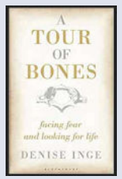
As we have only satellite internet access with very low data, Mthr Hilary has had to go *out* to attend, via Zoom, various diocesan and religious meetings. Many thanks to the several hosts for these meetings!

Our novice Fr Sergii has withdrawn from the novitiate and looks forward to resuming ministry in a parish. We give thanks for his time with us and pray God's blessing upon his future ministry.

Many of you have asked about Fr John-Julian. He is still in southern Wisconsin, still working on various writing projects, and still attended to by a desk cat. This fall, due to a serious accident, he will no longer be driving. As he did not wish to move up here to the monastery, the Order continues to provide all costs for his living and transportation, and he is bravely learning to handle Lyft, Uber, and other ride options. Thank you to those who have expressed concern about his situation!



Clockwise from bottom left: The celebratory hot chocolate on the day of the first snow • Putting out driveway markers for the snow plow • The tree in the refectory at Christmas • The highway through Menominee Reservation in the winter



A Tour of Bones: Facing fear & Looking for life • Denise Inge • Bloomsbury •

PP:224 • ISBN: 978-1-472-9130-74

Some years ago academic Denise Inge, better known for writing about Thomas Traherne, moved to a house that had a medieval charnel house in the basement and began writing about charnel houses. This elegant little book, her last, was the result. *A Tour of Bones* is part travelogue, history, reflection, and part challenging questions that Inge stumbles on during the course of her journey across Europe and in her tussle with words to yield the hidden, and unexpected, insight.

This journey from one charnel house to another is also one of sensuous life, drawn with vivid presence: a jumbled Polish bed-and-breakfast, a perfect Austrian breakfast at sunrise on a train, painful and joyful memories that unpack with their own logic in the baggage she carries from one destination to the next. Along the way her deliberate encounters with death in the form of bones, ideas, cultural practices and transience, also unearths an unembellished, lovingly drawn portrait of what it is to be human, and the willing vulnerability—the humility—this demands. Inge does not dress up how vulnerable she is on her "tour," nor hide her distaste, fear, or frustration, but in the presence of the bones of others—some centuries or even millennia old—there is nowhere to hide, and also no need to.

From her efforts, Inge extracts four questions which make demands on how she plans to live and to which she wants to hold herself "in some way answerable." "Some questions I think remake us...They work away at us and we work away at them and sometimes we carry them for a lifetime and yet the answer we come up with is not one that can ever be written down." The journeys that ultimately shaped these questions, and the conclusions her journeys bring her to, reveal themselves as the underside of a life of faith: "There is a bond between the living and the dead that is a kind of door to hope. We look at them and know what we shall be, and determine to do with our brief span some life-bringing thing. This is hope...bringing breath and love and sweat to bear upon the darkness."

Becoming the Bread of Love

Abridged version of the homily given at the Eucharistic Festival of the Diocese of Fond du Lac, August 2020

Mthr Hilary OJN

When I was a kid we often spent vacations with cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents, and one thing was always bound to happen. If any of us out-of-town kids were anywhere in range, one of the aunts or the grandmas would reach out, squeeze our face lovingly and say, "Oooh! C'mere once* and let me look at you!" There I'd be, clamped in place, letting myself get looked-at. But all the time I'd be thinking "can I go back outside" where everyone else was running around pelting each other with dirt clods. It wasn't until about forty years later I realized that what my elders were doing is a pretty good description of prayer. There is God, breaking into our preoccupations, taking our face in his hands, loving on us and saying "Oooh! C'mere once and let me look at you!" And us, for our part, letting ourselves be loved on and looked-at.

Many of us have been without the Eucharist for some months now. How do we understand ourselves as a Eucharistic People if we've had, and for the foreseeable future will have, little or no access to the most holy Sacrament of Jesus's Body and Blood?

I've shared my little family vignette because I want to place a response to that question into the context of that primary, prayerful movement of God breaking in—to bring us near, and love on us. It's a Eucharistic vision of being called and received, of belonging, of response, of being seen and known and loved, and finally, of being sent.

I was born into a family, into a matrix of relationships that preceded me and were there to receive me, that carried me, bore with me, and formed me as a person. Upon arrival in this family I was already beloved, already delighted in—I had been waited for, I was here, and I was welcomed. As people baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have been born into the family of Jesus by the love of the Father, by the labor of the Son, in the delight of the Holy Spirit. We are born into a matrix of relationships by a grace that preceded us, a grace that, as Eliot said, "will not leave us, but prevents us everywhere."

We are a Eucharistic People because God has made us so. It is not the Church that makes the Eucharist, but it is the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus, that makes the Church. We *do* that because we *have been made* that. In the one perfect offering of himself on the cross, Jesus has constituted us as his own Body; Jesus makes us bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. We do not cease to be that Eucharistic Body when we are not at the moment celebrating the Sacrament of Jesus's Body and Blood.

I'm sure you've seen those orientation signs in public places that say "YOU ARE HERE" with a red arrow and a dot. Julian of Norwich says that the blessed side of Christ is that dot, the place where we most truly live, and are most truly at home. We are tucked into the spacious, blessed side of Christ together with all the baptized, where, Julian says, there is room enough for all who shall be saved. So the little arrow that says YOU ARE HERE is pointing to that open space between the two halves of the Eucharistic Host broken at the altar. You are here. This is where we live, and where we live from, as a Eucharistic People.

And this also places a claim on us. To be a Eucharistic People is to be a people at the behest of an authoritative claim of love. It is to be a people who are subject to summons to be loved-on and looked-at, seen

**This Wisconsin idiom means "come over here"*

and known. What happens, then, in that seeing? Think of it, the curative, the healing power of truly being seen. In his Pastoral Prayer, the 12th-century abbot St Aelred of Rievaulx asks this of God:

> Lord, look on my soul's wounds. Your living and effective eye sees everything...see me, sweet Lord, see me. My hope, most Merciful, is in your loving kindness; for you will see me, either as a good physician sees, intent upon my healing, or else as a kind master, anxious to correct, or a forbearing father, longing to forgive.

Julian of Norwich says that our courteous Lord will only show us our sins by the light of his radiant and loving face, so that we are able to bear the truth he shows us and be healed. Because when we come together to celebrate the Sacrament of the Eucharist this is one of the things that happens. Facing Jesus, we are also confronted with ourselves, remembering what we have done and are capable of doing as wounded human beings. When Israel was wandering in the wilderness, God let them be hungry and then fed them with unfamiliar manna, not because God needed to know what was in their hearts, but because they did. And we also need to know.

When we find that out, Jesus says, "Yes, that is true—these things you have done, and done to me. But do not be afraid, for I will make all things well." Julian says that by allowing ourselves to be looked-at and loved by Jesus we will be made whole, made as like to Jesus in character as we already are in nature. Facing Jesus in prayer, as his Eucharistic Body, we too are faced—that is, we are given our faces, our true identity. And then we are taken up by Jesus in his one offering and offered to the Father. We human beings are the treasure that Jesus found and dug out of the field, that he sold everything, and suffered everything to buy. We are the treasure that he continually presents to the Father, rejoicing.

So we are a Eucharistic People bound into a primary, prayerful relationship of vision—of being called and received—of belonging, of response, of being seen and known and loved. And have no doubt, this is still going on continuously, even as we are wandering in a wilderness where we must, for love, be physically separated from one another, and from partaking of the Sacrament of Jesus, for as long as it takes.

It is tempting to say, right about now, that there are no way-markers for this situation, that it is unprecedented, with no signs for us to see and interpret. But our mothers and fathers in the faith would recognize this territory of confusion and uncertainty; they would recognize the fear of being cut adrift from one another and from our sacramental moorings, from the known and the familiar. And they would point us toward those way-markers which they knew well, like these: I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me out of all my terror—look to him and be radiant, and let not your faces be ashamed—taste and see that the Lord is good—taste and see, even in this place where the food of the journey is unfamiliar, physically distanced, not what we are used to.

Jesus is our way, Jesus is the Master of the feast and the Host of the household. So we look to him in the midst of this continuous Eucharist of offering and thanksgiving, of being broken open with him and given to others in new and unfamiliar ways.

So where is Jesus our way right now, but pressing faces maybe unfamiliar to us between his hands saying "Oooh! C'mere once and let me look at you!" We are being sent, as the Eucharistic Body of Jesus, to look where Jesus is looking, to see whom Jesus is seeing, and to love whom Jesus is loving. The Eucharistic family is expanding, being given their faces. And we, all of us, aunts, uncles, parents, grandparents have work to do.