*A Note from the Guardian*

Tacked onto our office bulletin board next to the work calendar is a bit of yogurt-company advertising, a carton lid that says "What Do You Hope For?" It has turned out to be a surprisingly fruitful question.

What do you hope for? Is it large enough? Is it worthy of your state as a person reflecting the glory of God and growing ever more into the likeness of Love? If one thing happened to Julian through the course of the revelations made to her, it was that her vision of God, and her understanding of God's loving intent for the world was expanded. Julian herself was expanded along with it.

More than that, *Whom do you hope in?* Lent offers a protected space to think deeply about these things, about our priorities, our desires and the ways we seek to live into them, and it gives us protected space and time to return to the most elemental concerns as embodied and spiritual beings on some kind of eternal trajectory. Who is at the end of that arc?

The nuns and monks of the Order of Julian wish you a blessed and hope-filled season of Lent that you may welcome the risen Jesus with joy.

Yours in Jesus and Julian, M. Hilary, OJN

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 • March 2020 • No. 1

the newsletter of the Order of Julian of Norwich

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# Community Notes

Winter began in early November and brought us a very wet, cement-like snow just before Thanksgiving. The following week we were pleased to receive Fr William into the monastery as a postulant. Fr William has been a long-time Oblate of the Order.

Our fields have been lying fallow since the farmer who was renting our land went out of business. As we would like to devote our arable land to organic or sustainable farming, we have been discussing in community what to do with the tillable pasture, how much of it to wild, and what crops we might plant on the remainder. The soil is very poor after years of spraying and we are consulting with a neighbor who has farmed this property previously by no-till methods.

We are more than 1/4 of the way through the mortgage, with thanks to all of you who have contributed to that effort so far!

After some years of work, and more of proof-reading-by-use, we have finished our new format chantbooks. The new format has a larger text in a beautiful font, and allows for corrections and necessary changes.

Mthr Hilary joined other Fond du Lac clergy at the clergy retreat in February. The soapshop is cranked up again and soap should be available beginning in March.

As we did last year, we hope to plant some new fruit trees again this spring. Some of the bee hives have been lost to the cold, but a few are still alive and we hope they will make it through winter.

*From bottom left: Sr Therese working in the kitchen • M Hilary working in the refectory • Planting new fruit trees last spring • New leaves in early May • Sr Cornelia with a finished chantbook*

## Spiritual Letters. Sister Wendy Beckett. Orbis, pp 305. ISBN: 978-1-6269-8051-8

Those who know Sister Wendy Beckett only as a great commentator on art may be surprised at the contents of this plain little book, unlike any of her other publications—not least because at only eight color plates, it is the least illustrated of them all. Published in 2013 (Sister Wendy died in 2018), this is a collection of her brief letters and notes from the years 1970-1986, edited by a Carmelite in close contact with Sister Wendy, who herself supplied a small, characteristic preface without revisiting any of the correspondence. Renowned for articulating the spiritual dimension of great art—without herself being an artist—here Sister Wendy articulates the spiritual dimension of the daily and ordinary, directly, succinctly, and with all her warm sympathy.

"Am struck by how art criticism uncovers a person's soul," she comments; she revealed some of her own in her many books on art, but these letters show deeper layers inaccessible by even the art criticism. Though some art commentary comes into this, and though the majority of letters are addressed to a religious superior, the issues, and often suffering, that Sister Wendy addresses are universal, and her counsel is seldom specific to religious life. She often refers to concrete examples when trying to make a point—Julian of Norwich, a neighbor near at hand in the Norfolk where Sister Wendy lived, makes several appearances, and Wendy thought most highly of her: "One can never read her without being pierced through by the Truth." As with Julian, the brevity and richness of most of her own text make this a good book for dipping in at any point; the sheer intensity of the wisdom in these pages, put homely and simply and sometimes challengingly, can make a day's meditation of a single paragraph, or sentence—and there are many such sentences. Almost all this excellent book lacks is a short index of names (of saints) and major themes, though some undated letters devoted to specific themes are so grouped at the end of the collection.

Many publishers over-endorse books that are only momentarily useful to a small audience; Orbis, without other ornament, has understated this prize among publications on spiritual direction with a single line: "This little book is a treasure trove of wisdom and sound simple advice."

## Starting Coordinates

Mthr Hilary OJN

What is it like to live with uncertainty? Not political or fiscal uncertainty, though there is enough of that to go around, but with an uncertainty that is far more encompassing and personally consequential. Consider the difference between a relationship in which there is unbroken love and trust between persons, and one which is conditional, where at any moment one might meet with love or anger, and there is no telling which. Which of these relationships will be a seed-bed for confident action, hope, and freedom, and which will not?

What is assumed about those with whom one is in relationship will determine why and how one responds, and how one acts in the world. This is as true about a relationship with God as it is with anyone else. In much of the Christian West, what has come to be assumed about the character of God toward us looks more like the second kind of relationship than the first, for we have come to assume that, along with being loving, God is also angry. Anger, or wrath as Julian calls it, is presumed to be an essential, ineluctable aspect of God's being. As such, wrath has to be accounted for in anything we can say about God's estimation of us and intentions toward us, and especially about God's sending of Jesus to us. The assumption of divine wrath is so pervasively influential, in fact, that even what is said about God's *love* has to be accommodated to it. Well-respected theologians write, almost apologetically, from the hypothesis of divine wrath as a given, and base their explanations of God's saving work on it's inevitability.

But what if it were not so? What if it turns out that God is not a wrathful being after all? What would become of our understanding of God's intentions, estimation, and love of us? How might the nature of our response to God change? What if it turns out that God does not have to be divided against God's self at the cross, Father against Son, the Son all abandoned as he throws his Body across sinful humanity to protect it from the Father? The answers we give to these questions have implications for the one big question at stake during the season of Lent which is, *"Who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?"*

In Lent we follow Jesus out into the desert where, as the Gospel says, he has been driven by the Holy Spirit of God to be tested by Satan. It may also be fair to say that during this time Jesus is testing his relationship with his Father as well. Is the Father's love constant and enduring? Can God be trusted to be and to act as God has always assured Israel that he would? Or would Jesus, in the last instance, be abandoned, bootless in the face of the devil's temptations?

What Jesus assumes about God his Father determines how he responds to Satan's temptations, and the confidence with which he does so. Following his forty days in the desert, what Jesus assumes about God his Father determines how he will conduct himself in the world—what he will say, what he will do. The confidence that Jesus has in the constancy of God's character determines the nature of his response to others, wherever he goes and with whomever he meets.

That *there is no wrath in God* is the revelation Jesus gave to Julian of Norwich that touched her to her core. That *there is no wrath in God* made all the difference in Julian's understanding of how God looks upon us, why it is that Jesus came to us and saves us, how we may approach God, and why. Jesus does not say to Julian from the cross, "Now God's wrath is satisfied by my offering on your behalf," but instead he asks her, "Are you well-satisfied that I suffered for you?" Julian hears from Jesus that *there is no kind of wrath in God ever*, full stop. Julian hears that Jesus died not to slake God's wrath, but the deep, wound-begotten wrath of humanity. It was human wrath that nailed Jesus to the cross, but it was unalloyed, constant divine love that judged our wrath and raised Jesus to life again. Julian tells us, again and again, that in God we can depend on a Love more vast than the earth, more certain and constant than the law of gravity, pulling us in, holding us close.

## A Change of Scene

Sr Cornelia OJN

The manger scene in our chapel has been packed away: Mary, Joseph, and the baby. So have the three kings and their camels. They will all spend the year in boxes and stored in the dark cool basement. The chapel floor has been swept clean of spruce needles. The choir chairs are back in position and Scheherezade's altar hanging has been taken down.

In Chapter 4, Julian tells us about something that is never packed or swept away: Jesus's love for us. Her visions have just begun. The crucifix at the foot of her bed has started to bleed:

> I saw the red blood trickling down from under the garland, hot and freshly and most plenteously....

Instead of being horrified, she cries out her thanks and praise to the Holy Trinity, for the person of the Lord Jesus:

> He is our clothing that for love wrappeth us and windeth us, halseth us and all becloseth us, hanging about us for tender love, that he may never leave us....Our Maker, Keeper, everlasting Lover, endless Joy and Bliss.

We can put another focus on those wrapping, winding, embracing and enclosing words: the manger scene (though now packed away in a box). In our heart we see the baby Jesus wrapped from top to bottom with a very long, warm, soft strip of cloth. Just as our love wraps him all around like that swaddling cloth—wound round...and round...and round with our love, our admiration, our thanks.