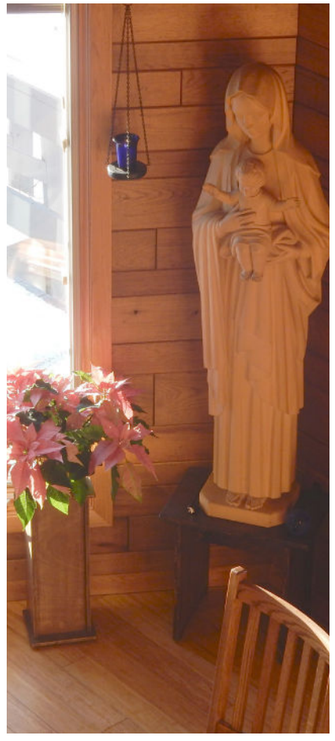
A Note from the Guardian



I am writing this note in the week before the Glasgow Climate Change Conference, and thinking about the object that Julian sees in her vision, a thing "as fragile and small as a hazelnut" sitting in the palm of her hand. She asks Jesus what it is, and he tells her it is all that is made. Fragile as it is, he says, all that is made—the whole created order—subsists and always shall because God loves it.

We are fellow travelers with the rest of the created order—and last-comers at that, as the Genesis story has it. The assignment God gave to us as namers and caretakers of creatures is an essential part of our vocation as human beings. So to view ourselves as set over against the rest of creation and our fellow beings and seeing them merely as sources of supply, is not only to do them damage, but to wound and deface our essential selves.

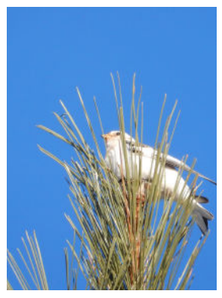
May this Advent, the anticipation of the God of Heaven coming into the world fragile, small and dependent, bring a renewed vision of our vocation as lovers, keepers and tenders of one another and the world we live in, all that is made, for God's own delight.

The sisters of the Order of Julian wish you every blessing of Jesus's coming this Christmas, and throughout the coming year.

Yours in Jesus and Julian,

M. Hilary, OJN

Guardian of the Order



The Order of Julian of Norwich is a contemplative Order of nuns of the Episcopal Church. Our widespread community of Oblates and Associates, women and men 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

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Community Notes

• Fall came early to the Northwoods, peaking in September. There was no apple harvest this year because of the late freeze at the end of May, but despite the lack of harvest to gather, somehow there was no less work than usual! We have got the wood in the house for winter and are (almost) ready for the first snows.

• As with very many elsewhere, we have again been zooming to annual meetings instead of attending in person. In October, Mthr Hilary was online at the Diocesan Convention, and in November for the Affiliate Priors' meeting.

• This fall one of our unexpected events was to volunteer—or be volunteered—at a water station for the Wolfman Triatholon. The water station happened to be at the end of our driveway, and so we spent one Saturday in September trying to hand little cups of water to people riding bicycles. Mthr Hilary provided peanut butter cookies which were even more popular, and had a better hand-off success rate, than the water.

• A different unexpected event was the gift of labor two neighbors gave us, who brought over heavy equipment and spent several hours separating and rearranging our piles of oak and pine logs. The oak was kept for firewood when we had our woods thinned a few years ago, but we haven't been able to get to this project till now. Moving them has cleared the space we plan to use for our burial ground, another project for next year.

• At present we anticipate reopening the guesthouse some time in the new year. If you have your calendar open, stay tuned!

Clockwise from bottom left: Our neighbors moving logs • Dressing the altar last Christmas • Sr Therese, Triatholon volunteer • Reading by the Christmas tree • The combined pile of oak

Being Interrupted: Reimagining the Church's Mission from the Outside In •
Ruth Harley & Al Barrett • SCM Press • 262pp • ISBN 978-0-3340-5862-5

Being Interrupted is a book about discomforting the comfortable in order to open the way for creative opportunities that have been obscured by the status quo. The book properly begins with four stories, in a British context, of four challenges to the world—race, class, gender, and climate change. The authors open with the claim that not only are imposed social divisions and "unequal distributions of power […] sinful, signs of humanity's falling short of what we are created to be" but that a solution is hidden in plain sight: being "interrupted…disrupted, challenged and changed" precisely by the lives, human and other-than-human, obscured by these divisions and challenges.

One of the more powerful exercises in interruption this book asks of the reader is a "privilege quiz" to tease out what the reader has inherited in terms of "invisible" advantages, and how the blindspots endemic to privilege enable us to collude with destructive divisions. The key central chapters pay close attention to five stories in Mark's Gospel where, in different ways, Jesus's activity is *interrupted* and *disrupted*" and how his response is shaped or changed by the encounter. This ties into the interruption addressed by the title about the possibility of another way of being church, which privileges the appearing of "God's kin-dom," and the greatest possibility for transformation and change, precisely in those who are, under the current status quo, "marginal" and disregarded.

This status quo, what Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano calls "a system of power that is always deciding in the name of humanity who deserves to be remembered, and who deserves to be forgotten," is challenged by the authors in their careful analysis of a way forward. The energy unleashed by the authors' "what-if" questions is illustrated with stories from their working-class parish and also unpacked in the concluding chapters: "what if" "the places we have thought of as 'edges' become holy ground on which, together, we discover the glory of God, and therefore become new 'centres'—but multiple, interdependent, disruptive, transformative 'centres' […] through the power of the Spirit in our midst"?

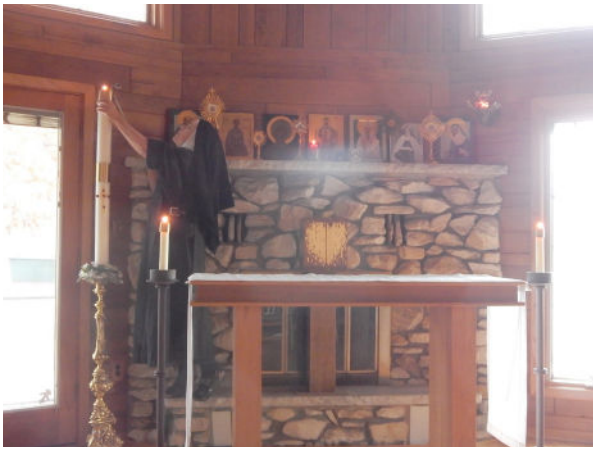
On Hospitality in Prayer

Mthr Hilary OJN

"God, of your goodness, give me yourself." Each afternoon at the conclusion the monastery's time of still prayer we make this bold request, using Julian's words from the *Revelation of Divine Love*, where she tells us, "God wishes to be known, and He delights that we remain in Him, because all that is less than He is not enough for us." Julian's high estimation of humankind is perhaps nowhere more clear in her writings than this. In answer to God's own desire for and delight in the soul, it prays boldly, "God, of your goodness, give me yourself; for you are enough for me. And I can ask nothing that is less that can be full honor to you; and if I ask anything that is less, ever shall I be in want, for only in you have I all."

I can freely make Julian's prayer my own, to put words to my desire, to help me understand and inhabit it. But however edified I am by Julian's visionary experience, it remains hers alone. Jesus desires to have with me, and with each of us, a unique and unrepeatable relationship.

The faculty of imitation is how we become real human beings—think of the language acquisition process, or that of socialization—and it is how we learn to become Christians as well. The saints show us the way, teaching us what to desire and how to ask for it, how to live a Jesus-shaped life in our



own bodies and within our own circumstances. So, while we cannot live off of Julian's experience or that of any other saint, Julian gives us a pattern for how to be hospitable to Jesus when he desires to break lovingly into our lives and time, the "daily visitations" that the Collect for the 4th Sunday in Advent tells about.

First, accept the invitation being held out; willingly step into those spaces where God said God would be pleased to meet us, in the services and the sacraments of the Church, in its embodied tradition, the prayer of the Daily Office, and so on. Julian was given her vision of Jesus crucified while she was in the midst of what she and others thought was a mortal illness. Not to put too fine a point on it, she was sickening to die and wasn't feeling just tippy-top. By all rights she could have just curled into a ball and said "no visitors, please." But in what were thought to be her last moments, when her parish curate came and brought the crucifix for her to gaze upon, Julian accepted the invitation to do so—and it was then that the Showings began.

Second, keep a clear head to evaluate the inspirations that may come to you. When Julian had the thought, given her "as it were, by a friendly intermediary" to look up to heaven instead of upon the crucifix as she had been directed, she considered for a moment and then said no. Julian replied to the thought, responding that she would come to heaven by no other way than by Jesus crucified.

Third, be persistent in your asking. Julian went on for something like half her book, occupied again and again in asking God what was God's view of human sinfulness. She needed to know, she said, so that she could know God better and thus love God better.

Fourth and last, be prepared to be surprised, be prepared to have your mind changed. Julian came into the revelations with a certain cultural view of a wrathful God and the dread judgment of sinners. But the truth she received from the vision of Jesus crucified was something else entirely. Julian says, "Thus powerfully, wisely, and lovingly was the soul tested in this vision. Then I saw truthfully that it was appropriate that I needs must assent with great reverence, rejoicing in God."

Encountering Jesus

Sr Therese OJN

Thomas was one of eleven apostles who refused to believe the news of the resurrection until he had encountered the risen Jesus himself. With just cause to be skeptical about the matter, he is simply reflecting to his colleagues their own initial doubt, and asking for what they themselves have received.

If this scene where Thomas "doubts" is the apostles' first missionary endeavor—and to one of their own, no less—they don't come off very well. In their excitement the apostles presume that nothing more is needed than the authority of their word—they who had not believed the word of the first witnesses.

These are both important points, but the first may be most important. In their excitement, the apostles presumed that nothing more was needed to prompt faith than the authority of their word—not their witness. They had encountered the risen Jesus, but they are only offering Thomas their word, not an encounter. Now they are rudely brought home to the fact that their words mean next to nothing if they cannot back them up with a living witness, which in this case, Jesus humbly provides for them.

For the incident with Thomas is not really about doubt and evidence, so much as what are the real grounds for faith. Those who later did not see and yet believed, nonetheless also encountered the risen Jesus in the witness of the community. To strip the grounds for faith of the need for living witness, to reduce it to hearing a word, to a game of the intellect, instead of offering a living encounter that can be believed with more than the neck up, is to set up an endless series of the very situation that Thomas walks into. In his gospel John has constantly emphasized living encounters like this, which underline that his sense for the word logos, with which he began his gospel, may not have meant to him what it has become.

For those who will follow, the followers themselves are called to be the living witness, must live Jesus and permit him to live in them so fully and unquestionably, that their very lives will say "we have seen the Lord" and no one will be able to question it, or need to ask for other evidence.