A Note from the Guardian

Whether we're entering the second year of Covid-induced shutdown measures feeling like confident seasoned veterans of a long campaign or something more like a heap of yesterday's clothes, one thing is certain: those of us who have not lost loved ones to Covid-19 are likely to forget a lot of this.

For all the assertions that the pandemic will change everything—art, culture, social mores—the reality will probably be that old behaviors and habits will slowly reassert themselves, and much of ordinary life resume as though Covid-19 were a bad dream now shaken off by the arrival of day. The ability to forget trauma is a mercy that allows human beings to go on, and not only to go on but to flourish. But double-edged creature that it is, forgetting can also be a curse. In good times it is easy enough to forget the many mercies that have carried us when we could not carry ourselves.

Because of this we are given, year by year, the mercy of Lent which allows us to stop, remember and reorient. Emily Dickinson once said that "hope is the thing with feathers". Hope is also that dogged thing that stays close to the ground and simply puts one foot in front of the other, remembering that there is a future and that this moment will pass.

So as this issue of *Julian's Window* comes to you in mid-Lent, we have the picture on the cover of the celebation of Holy Easter, our future, the most durable and unchangeable reality of all, and the thing toward which all hope points.

The monks and nuns of the Order wish you a holy Lent and blessed Eastertide.

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

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Community Notes

Thank you for all your continued gifts, especially in this unusually straitened year and unusually cold winter!

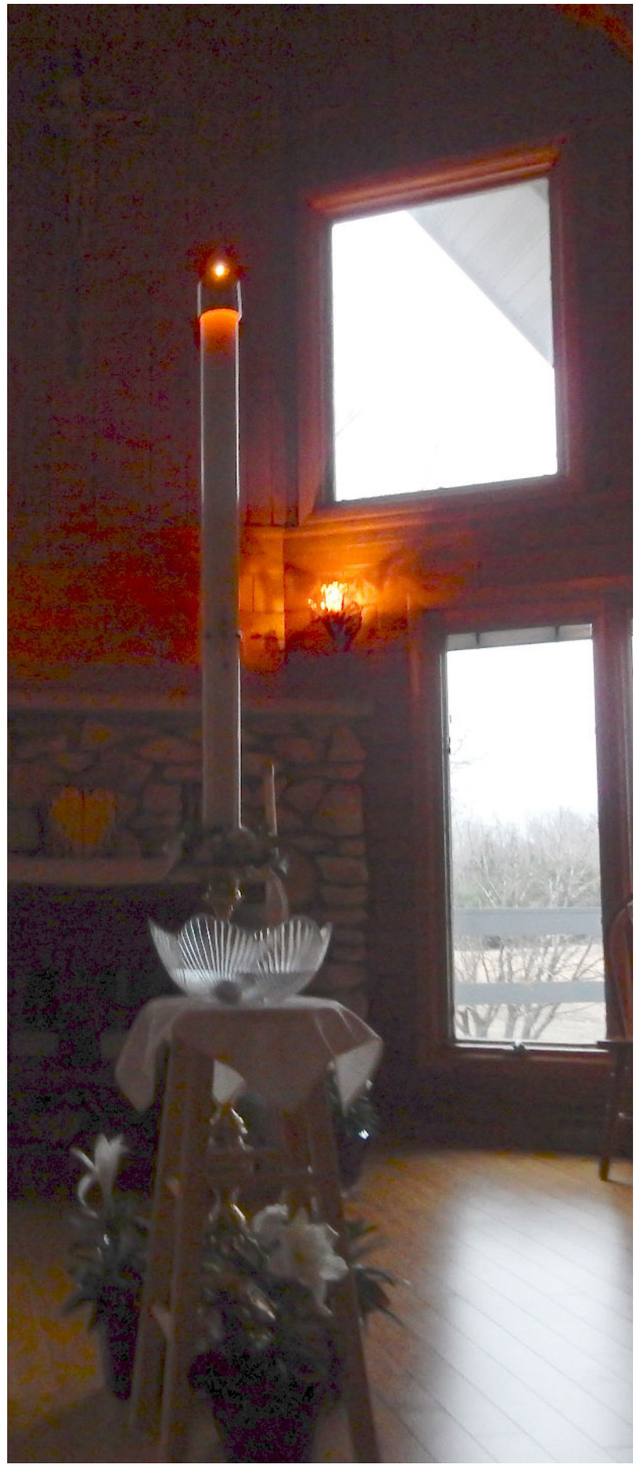
During Christmas there was much fog at night, and much rime in the mornings. This made the woods especially beautiful when there was so little snow, which finally arrived just before the new year.

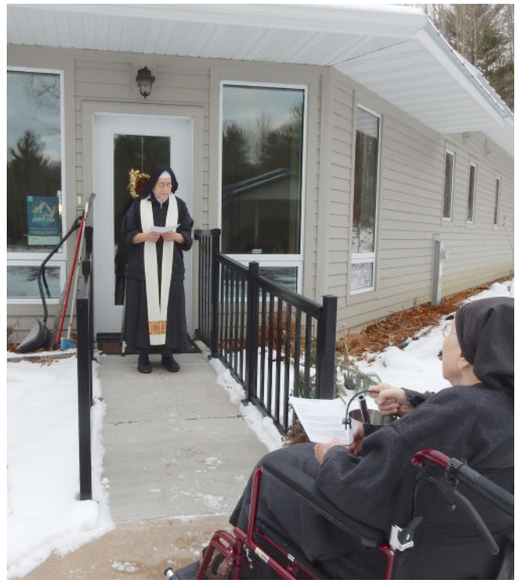
In this issue we invited two of our affiliates to describe what their Christian observance has been like in the past year. Since a monastery essentially is "church at home," the past year has not changed much for us in that regard, even if our neighbors cannot come to Eucharist for the present and we still cannot receive any guests.

But this extra "solitude," tempered as it is by community life, is very different from the varieties of difficulties others around the world have been dealing with. Each day and each night, we remember in prayer our unity with the whole body of Christ throughout the world, and all those who are alone and suffering, and facing new difficulties.

We are waiting, with many others, to see what may or may not open up again this summer. With many other monasteries, our guesthouse will remain closed for the time being.

We will not be able to hold our annual Julianfest this June, but hope to share with you our reflections on Julian following our community "forum" on St Julian's Day.





From left: the paschal candle in the chapel • the beekeeper readying the hives for spring • blessing the house at Epiphany

The Way of Julian of Norwich: A Prayer Journey Through Lent • Sheila Upjohn • SPCK • 112 pp • ISBN: 978-0281-0836-95

Where the Eye Alights: Phrases for the 40 Days of Lent • Marilyn Chandler McEntyre • Eerdmans • 128 pp • ISBN: 978-0-8028-7698-0

In her newest Julian book in several years, Sheila Upjohn brings meditations for Lent themed by Julian. Upjohn brings us into Julian's cell and the world of her *Revelations* in trademark succinctly colloquial narration, briskly and pointedly drawing out the substance of the *Revelations*. For those who haven't previously considered the *Revelations* as material for personal conversion, this "journey of prayer" indicates some signposts that other books on Julian might have left in a different light. Each chapter concludes with a few questions for reflection.

Where the Eye Alights, by Marilyn McEntyre, is a small book which offers, condensed one day at a time, words as guides—forty common or scriptural words or ideas for the forty days of Lent. Each chapter is a very short meditation—as small as a page—for each day of Lent. The reflections "come from a very simple practice of daily meditation on whatever has come to mind in the quiet of early morning." Each, in some small way, helps to question the language we use, and invites ways of approaching various matters more thoughtfully or playfully. "Lent is a time of permission" which offers "the explicit invitation the liturgical year provides to change pace, to curtail our busyness a bit...to listen for the voice of the Spirit saying 'Here...'"

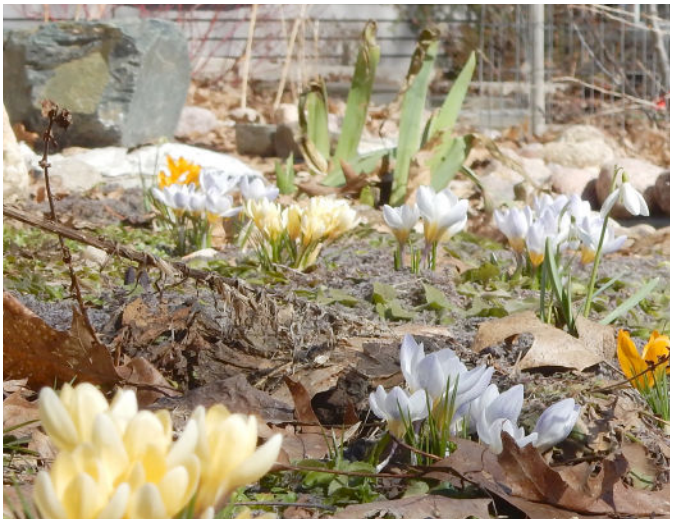
Both of these books offer this permission in open-ended ways. While each ends with very brief meditations of the Stations of the Cross, each is also more than a book for Lent. Both are concerned with discipleship in the ways the small print of our lives manifests in large print; both can be profitably read at any time of the year, with the gentle encouragement that "repentance"—and all its surprising fruit— "isn't once and for all, but a way of life."

Finding the stable point

Michelle Jackson ObJN

When it became apparent that Covid was a real threat, in March of 2020, the church I go to stopped all in-person services, except for a few clergy and other ministers who were allowed in the building to valiantly try to speed-learn how to stream services by way of a cell phone. This was, of course, occurring everywhere. It took patience and forbearance to not complain at the poor quality. (It got better!) The situation for everyone shifted from better to worse and back again over the course of the last year. I have not been inside the church building since March 8, 2020. I offered to the priest in charge the OJN prayer for Spiritual Communion, and it is now a regular part of the services. But during a recent conversation with an oblate, I learned she had not received communion regularly for two years, as her residence is quite isolated, but she is more self-sufficient as a result.

The spiritual practices of the Daily Office and Centering Prayer are treasures, as is the Book of Common Prayer. When the churches stopped meeting in person, there was a lot of media coverage about churches shutting down, closing. But the church never shuts down. The church is people, the building where the church usually meets, is a roof over an altar. The church is us, now in our homes. We know this but still struggle with feelings of isolation and grief over the loss of our common worship together, as well as grief over those we know who have died. What does it mean to be "church at home"?



It helps to have a regular schedule, but sticking with it takes discipline. It was routine to get up at about the same time and say the morning office, go through the day, then pray the evening office, etc. But as the days flew into weeks and then months of Pandemic, my tendency was to stay up later or get up later, because we were all stuck at home and so what....? I am pretty disciplined about diet, but after awhile, ice cream every night seemed a good idea. But always, there is the Daily Office to mark the beginning and ending of the day. It feels like a monastic rule, to stay put (stay at home!) and work through the personal struggles of the day, with the Daily Office as parentheses. I know parents of young children have struggled with home schooling while working from home. Many elderly have struggled with loneliness. How can we focus our minds to pray when there is so much going on at home? But how can we can *not* pray?

Our vows of stability, conversion of life and obedience are more relevant than ever. Church at home always means praying as best we can within the circumstances of life. Julian, in her revelations, writes about the frequency of changes in emotion and how irrelevant those changes are to the relationship with Christ. Feelings matter, but our relationship with God does not depend on those feelings. The Daily Office helps to direct thoughts, but sometimes the mind glazes over, the words seem to float off into air. It's hard to engage in scripture when the rest of the world seems intent on nonsense. Sometimes the only part of the office that grabs my attention is "Oh God make speed to save us!" Maybe that is enough, some days. We pray as we can, not as we can't. We can light a candle in the darkness, and resolve to be a point of spiritual stability in the world.

Separate-Togetherness

Kathie Clark ObJN with Bill Clark

"Church at home" began ten months ago. At that time we had no idea how long it would last. We still don't know. We are learning new ways of thinking about God's presence, faith/worshipping communities, and our sense of belonging.

We celebrated the Easter Vigil just weeks after moving into our new home in New Hampshire. It was especially meaningful. We processed in from the garage with a lighted candle, singing "The Light of Christ." We moved down the hall and into the living room where my husband, a deacon, sang the Exsultet. We read lessons, sang hymns, and said Canticles. It was a "wonder"-ful experience and felt a bit like a house blessing.

After not being able to receive the sacrament in the form of bread and wine for months, it feels like this fast is lasting too long. Since we have chosen not to have computers, and can only connect to virtual sources by audio-only, we sometimes opt for Sunday worship on our own. We use BCP Eucharist Rite II in conjunction with a form for Spiritual Communion. We sing hymns, read all appointed lessons, and share our own reflections on the readings, and our own Prayers of the People including OJN and parish intercessions as appropriate.

Over the last several months, the physical connection to parish worship (people and buildings) has shifted from "necessary" to "optional/absent" in the quasi-isolation of our present existence. In the absence of sharing the sacrament of bread and wine, we are forced to rely on a more "lively" sense of God's presence wherever we are, alone or with others. There has been a growing sense of the "mystical" aspect of Christ that is becoming more apparent. It seems easier to hear God's still small voice in a more solitary worship setting.

Some of the positive results of ten months of separate parochial worship are these:

1) We are compelled to reach out to others by phone during the week since we don't see them on Sunday.

2) Keeping those who cannot get to Sunday worship in future (in the event of illness) can be accomplished with technology so they are not isolated from the parish family.

3) Connection with a parish contemplative prayer group by phone (audio) has been a way to keep informed about parish events and people.

Some concerns we have for future Sunday worship, once we are able to gather again, include:

1) The possible movement away from the Eucharist as the principal form of worship.

2) The use of "virtual" worship to replace in-person worship.

3) (In the event of continued online worship for those able to gather together physically) the prolonged loss of the sense of pilgrimage and the effort to gather physically in a designated, particular location each week.

Through it all, the connection with OJN has been very important to us both. The monastery and Oblate community newsletters and prayer requests—received through USPS—have offered Good news, steadfast encouragement, and stability. Knowing the Eucharist is being celebrated daily at Our Lady of the Northwoods has given meaning to our spiritual communion. This Order has been a very strong rock during this time. Of course, the praying of the Daily Office is a major anchor, knowing that it joins us not only to OJN, but Christians around the world who are continuing to pray it.

All of us join in "separate togetherness" as the Body of Christ. We will keep on "keeping-on" in the certain hope of God's love and presence, with St Julian by our side, for as long as it is necessary.