*A Note from the Guardian*

Every morning for us, no matter the season, morning prayer begins when it's dark outside with a bidding of hope and an answering exclamation of purposeful response:

*Open our lips, O Lord*
*And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.*

Our praise is not contingent on how the day might turn out. Right now it's a time of transition in so many ways, both locally and across the world. Perhaps it even looks pretty dark. None of us knows, exactly, what our life is finally going to look like, once the full daylight of transition's end returns. As it will.

But one thing we do know is this: God will answer our hopeful bidding, will open our lips, our hearts, our minds, so that we may continue to proclaim daily, along with you, God's praise. Thank you for your part in our life of prayer.

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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**John-Julian OJN 1932-2021**

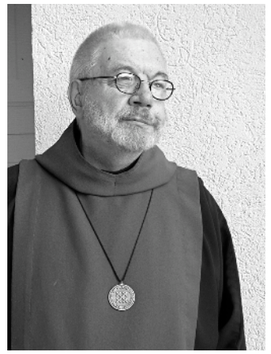
Some of you may know that Fr John-Julian had been suffering failing health for some time. In early July, he fell in his apartment and broke his hip; he developed pneumonia in the hospital and died a week later on 15 July.

John Douglas Swanson was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1932. The family moved to Stevens Point during his early youth, where a love for the arts abetted his attachment to the Anglo-Catholic world. The priesthood attracted him from childhood. He was a talented raconteur, writer, and actor, with immense charisma and boundless energy. His sister Joan, to whom he was deeply devoted, would be his champion until her death in 2012.

He earned a BA from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota in 1954, and an MDiv from Nashotah in 1957; he was ordained to the diaconate on 2 Feb 1957 and priested 9 August the same year by Bishop William Brady of Fond du Lac.

His first appointment, at age 25, was as Vicar of St Mary of the Snows, Eagle River WI, in 1957. From 1960 he would work in both parish ministry and various secular enterprises. In 1978 he moved to Norwich CT. In this year Paulist Press published their new translation of Julian and Fr Swanson became interested in her writings.

In 1981 he became rector of the Church of the Resurrection in Norwich CT. The following year he decided to found a contemplative religious Order with Julian of Norwich as patron. Bishop Arthur Walmsley is reputed to have told him, "This must be the work of the Holy Spirit, for you are the *last* person who could found a contemplative Order."



After three years Fr Swanson was permitted to found the Order in the rectory, and professed life vows in late 1985, taking the name John-Julian. He remained the rector of his parish until 1987. In early 1988 the Order was invited to Wisconsin by Bishop Roger White, and Fr John-Julian began serving at St Mark's in South Milwaukee. He would retire from parish ministry in 1994.

Fr John-Julian found the demands of monastic leadership much more challenging than he had expected, and was unprepared for what life in community would ask of him as an ordinary monk, post-leadership, in 1995.

In 2004 he was granted permission to live as a hermit outside of the monastery, with the understanding that he was always welcome at the monastery to take his turn celebrating Eucharist and preaching. In 2015 the Order moved to White Lake in northeastern Wisconsin; offered a hermitage up north, Fr John-Julian chose to remain in southeastern Wisconsin, caring for several cats in succession.

In retirement Fr John-Julian published books on Julian and other Christian classic texts.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

## Community Notes

• While spring was quiet, summer made up for this with many unexpected outings. Mthr Hilary went to southern Wisconsin to attend to Fr John-Julian, and later went back with a neighbor to clean out his apartment. The funeral was held in August at Nashotah House Seminary.

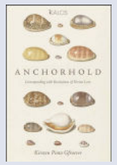
• An important change which we had hoped to announce earlier this year is that, as of this May, the monastic community will admit women only. This decision was made after many years of slow discernment, and unanimously by all the monastics.

• One great event of the summer was the gift of a new altar of local wood, made by friends. If you've ever wondered how the altar stone gets in a wooden altar, the picture on the cover is how three of our neighbors worked it out with a platform lowered by screws.

• We are often asked how our vegetable garden is doing. This year, even more than in previous years, we can say, "Our neighbors' gardens are doing great!" We are continually being brought produce during the most productive months, which is a great gift as many other responsibilities have kept us out of our own garden.

• We have lost income this year due to the loss of two pensions, and are grateful for your sustaining support especially due to the mortgage.

• Due to Covid uncertainties our guesthouse remains closed for the time being.




Anchorhold: Corresponding with Revelations of Divine Love ✦ Kirsten Pinto Gfroerer ✦ Wipf & Stock ✦ pp 197 ✦ ISBN: 978-1-7252-7658-1

After years of mostly academic readings of Julian, writers are beginning to approach Julian more personally, and making personal responses. Canadian lay theologian Kirsten Pinto Gfroerer is one of those who reads Julian as personal letters, and embarked on 86 letters of her own in response. The result is an intense and deeply engaged "correspondence" that is one woman's modern version of the *Showings*. Threaded with bits of biography and reflections on current or past situations, these letters from one lay theologian to another repeatedly ask, "What does this mean?" and tries to work out a response.

At the beginning, Gfroerer had promised Julian she would "always try to find truth in what you say to me no matter how uncomfortable I become." Her struggle does not result in answers, but reaches the understanding "that I stay with the crucified Christ in every single one of these discussions." Gfroerer perhaps reaches her most illuminating correspondence when she reflects on Julian's teaching of sin and love: "The story that sin tells me of my life is that I am limited, flawed, and that I have done much wrong, which I must hurry to attempt to right…The story love tells of my life is that the love of God is active; this love is the only action there is, and this love wants me to flourish and it is working and has worked all the way to the end of suffering…creating a vast landscape of possibility and compassion for others…"

Gfroerer works mostly from Warrack's translation but sometimes brings in Windeatt's and Spearing's, as well as Watson & Jenkins's. Her patient attentiveness to the Showings sometimes turns up illuminating new facets, while sometimes she interprets some matters differently (inexplicably, she views and treats Julian's "small object the size of a hazelnut" as a literal hazelnut). While deeply personal, her "letters" to Julian are no popular introduction, but an accessible and engaged academic offering, and offered with an ear for how the Showings resonate with modern lives and some modern questions. For Gfroerer, the correspondence is worth all the trouble; she ends, "I am so grateful…"

# Hunger

Sr Therese OJN

In the sixth chapter of Mark, framing the incident of the loaves and the lake, are two vignettes of people responding to Jesus's presence with haste, even preempting whatever he had come to do. They come with their hungers—for instruciton, for healing—and Jesus feeds them.

These two vingettes of teaching and healing are different versions of the hungers that lead people to Jesus. The people come to Jesus to be taught, and he teaches. They come to him to be healed, and he heals. For all this to happen, those who come first have to become aware of their need for instruction and healing, to have a hunger for what Jesus can provide.

This is the case with Jesus's disciples as well, with each of their inner populations of the untaught and unhealed. When they go to Jesus or when he comes, do they rush to bring him their sick parts, their weaknessnes, or do they hide them away and say, "That is not me, I am really quite good and I know enough," and so what is sick remains untouched? Are they hungry for what he gives?

None of them will ever be completely taught or healed on earth, but for these disciples, who are called to be Jesus's action and his healing in the world, in whom Jesus is constantly available and through whom he wants to be available to others, they have few needs as great as to bring him their ignorances, their wounds, their illnesses of mind or heart. For despite their best efforts to serve, as Julian put it, "I shall do nothing at all except sin, yet my sin shall not prevent God's goodness from working." And if they remember and live from this place of their need, constantly going to Jesus for everything, he will be enough for them.

# Requiem at Nashotah House

Mthr Hilary OJN

Were I to take this can of soda, shake it vigorously and suddenly pop the top, the resulting clean-up would be, let us say, formidable. Especially in this hallowed space.

And this is not unlike the sort of internal tumult that can be generated considering the unexpected death and homegoing of a large personage—in this case a personage known variously to us gathered here as uncle, friend, priest, monk, mentor, founder, scholar, and so on. The clean-up of the grief process could be, and often is, formidable.

So that is why the readings we have today contain such a strong counsel to patience, to waiting. Again and again they ask us to hold the soda can of our emotions, our memories, our hopes, our fears, our conclusions—to hold it gently. Even trustfully to put the whole of our grieving, for the present, under a cloud of unknowing, perhaps even to back away slowly.

For we do not know what we shall be. What Father John-Julian shall be. What we do know is that we are God's children now. That is, amazing creatures as we are, we are not yet finished, not yet finished-with. What we shall be has not yet been shown us. But we do know that we will be like Jesus, in whose likeness we are made and who put his mark upon us at baptism.

Because Jesus lives we too shall live. Because Jesus was raised, we too shall be raised. Because Jesus's glorified body still bears his wounds, so shall ours. Julian of Norwich says that when we come up above, our wounds will be known and seen as honors in heaven, not as the painful sorrows that we have known and felt and lived with here. How this happens, we do not know. So we must put this, too, under a cloud of unknowing, a cloud of patient trust.

I was writing to a correspondent of Fr. John-Julian's last week, saying that he died on July 15th from the complications of a fall suffered the previous week. And it occurred to me that this pretty well sums up the case for every one of us. We all face death from the complications of a fall suffered long ago, time out of mind.

But in one of the best sentences of Julian's writing, she says, "When Adam fell, God's Son fell...Adam fell from life to death into the pit of this miserable world and after that into hell. God's Son fell with Adam into the pit of the womb of the Maiden (who was the fairest daughter of Adam) and that in order to obtain for Adam exemption from guilt in heaven and on earth. And he mightily fetched Adam out of hell."

And so he did, and so he does. "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away." "Mercy works and grace works," says Julian, "protecting us," assisting us to wait for love to come to its complete fruition, for "in all this," she says, "the sweet eye of pity and of love never departs from us, and the working of mercy ceases not."