A Note from the Guardian

In her book Julian tells of her visions of Jesus crucified and describes the differing manners of her reception of them. Sometimes the revelations were mediated by bodily sight, graphically vivid and detailed. Others came, she says, by inward spiritual sight or by words formed in the understanding.

Parts of the visions Julian understood at once; other showings were taken in yet clarified by another revelation later in the series. Some Julian did not fully understand even twenty years later when she began to write the second, more theologically synthesized account of her experience. But there was one meaning Julian did take in again and again throughout the sixteen visions. Love was God's meaning in giving Julian the visions; love was God's meaning in giving himself to us all.

As we observe the events of our times, vividly in detail or discerned obscurely, we cannot always know their immediate import, their ongoing meaning, or what will befall as a result. But we are assured that whatever human intent set them in motion, God works mysteriously in amongst all things as love, for love, that love may have the last word. To that end God gave us Jesus, the first word, to show God's self clearly and continuously in all that Jesus did and said.

We pray that you may receive the revelation of Jesus with joy as he seeks to give himself to you in this season of his Advent, and in his coming at Christmas as love and for love.

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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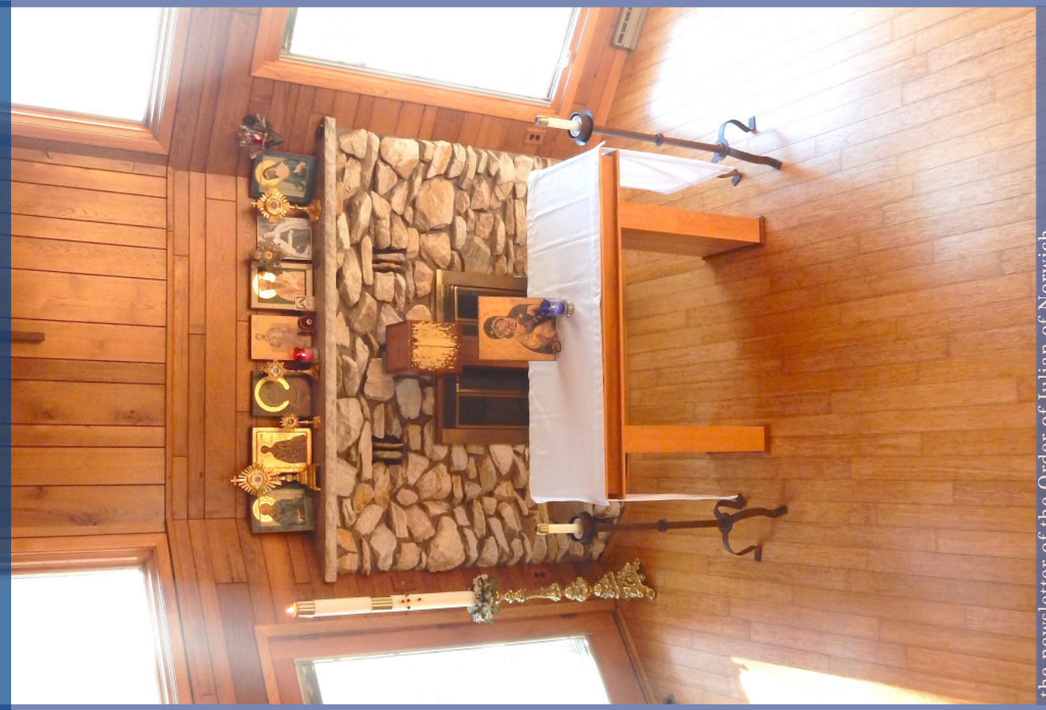
the newsletter of the Order of Julian of Norwich



Electronic Address Service Requested

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Community Notes

• This summer was unusually busy even by our standards. In June, despite some concerns it wouldn't happen, we were able to hold Julianfest this year, and it was wonderful to see those of our affiliates who were able to come.

• In August we held Sr Cornelia's funeral in Waukesha and were joined by a gathering of Wisconsin affiliates and local friends who remembered her.

• Most of our time at home was another summer of the-not-working landline; our phone line was, as another monastery says of their own, "temperamental." Related to lightning strikes and mice, it's usually a summertime issue.

• In June, thanks to a gift, we were able to attend the Monastic Institute in Collegeville. Thanks to another gift, Sr Therese attended the Julian Conference in Oxford UK.

• It's been a very busy "creature" year, between snakes, cranes, owls, a badger in the field, porcupines in the garage (safely evicted), and most enjoyably the daily summertime 8 AM loon flyover. For several weeks we've been circled by a few flocks of foraging turkey hens and pullets.

• We took advantage of some fair fall weather to have a belated barn-clean-up day, removing fast-growing volunteer "landscaping," attending to broken windows, and patching up a few loose boards. Some extra hands helped with repairing the fence when we were joined by friends from NY passing through. The barn was built in 1919 by George Alft's grandfather and is in great shape.

• Some of you have asked how our mortgage is doing. We're happy to say that at less than 55k it's in the home stretch, but we still need your help. Thank you for anything you can offer!

Clockwise from bottom left: clearing brush from around the barn • the gathering at Julianfest • the barn and repaired fence • preparing the creche in the chapel

The Sound of Life's Unspeakable Beauty • Martin Schleske • Eerdmans • pp384 •
ISBN: 978-0-8028-7614-0

It is hard to do justice to a book of such quality in a few short words. As Makoto Fujimura says in the foreword: "This is a beautiful book"—and in many layers. It is rare to find a "spiritual" book that has been so carefully produced, with so much quality, from the binding, to the paper, to the text, to the images, to the carefulness of the translation (from German). But as Fujimura also notes, this "beauty" is not about ornament or sentiment, but is "filled with deeply wrought words of wisdom…full of the time-tested sacrifice of serving artists and the honor given to what patient violin-making requires."

Schleske's book—which he calls "a collection of little books" and which can indeed be read that way—could be read as the process of making a violin, everything from finding the tree to polishing the finished instrument; it could be read as a collection of theological insights on several themes, which themselves cover the life of grace and can find echoes in the writings of numerous saints from more than one tradition. It certainly ties these two things together in a unique and compelling way, set along the contour of Schleske's own journey of faith and his vocations as parent and luthier: "A truly relevant faith involves a loving search and a searching love. This love is not something that you command; it is something under whose command you put yourself. It is an emerging work, similar to a work of art, for here we find a creative power and a holy presence out of which we can truly live."

Playing off a quote of artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser, Schleske wanted to "create metaphors for life" that help us "learn to truly listen and truly see." "A metaphor" to Schleske is not simply a figure of speech but "a dialogue between what is visible and what is invisible. Everything creative is a metaphor if we learn to truly listen and truly see." This book of immense beauty can help us truly listen and truly see.

What Jesus offers

Mthr Hilary OJN

Among the various readings for the first Sunday of Advent is one from the prophet Isaiah. He speaks of God who "did awesome deeds that Israel did not expect, God came down, the mountains quaked at his presence." God did things Israel did not expect, which is to say, they expected something else.

Julian tells us, "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…and that in order to obtain for Adam exemption from guilt in heaven and on earth. And he mightily fetched Adam out of hell."

Of all the awesome deeds God could have done, surely none of us were expecting this.

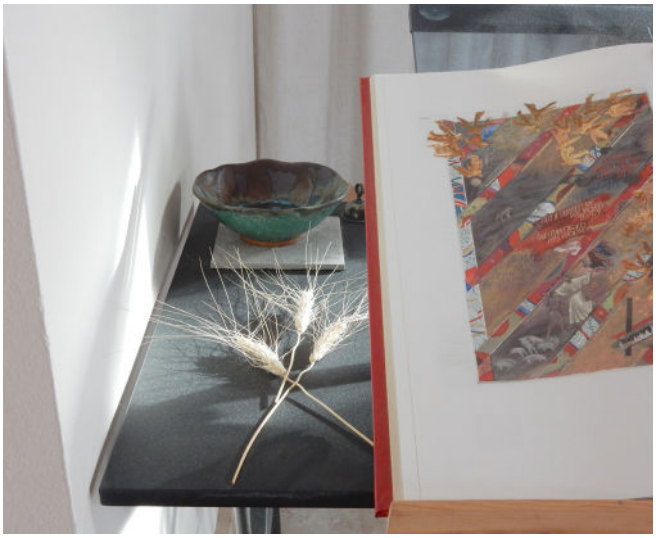
Who and what are we expecting, and how will it be at the end? The first Sundays of every Advent traditionally invite us to consider not only the past and the definitive joining of the timeless with time in the birth of Jesus, not only the future and the end of our common life as we know it, but also to zoom in and consider our own end, our own death. It is usually the case that Jesus seeks entry into our lives with the most infinite courtesy and humility, awaiting our bidding. How will it be when Jesus will come to us, for us, all unannounced? Here is St Francis de Sales on the matter:

> "Consider how uncertain is the day of your death. My soul, one day you will leave this body. When will it be? In winter or in summer? In the city or in the country? By day or at night? Suddenly or after due preparation? From sickness or by accident?...Unfortunately we know nothing whatsoever about all this. Only one thing is certain: we will die and sooner than we think." (the Fifth Meditation, *Intro. to the Devout Life*)

St Paul writes to a church waiting for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, an end for which, it is clear, both they and we require strengthening in order to be able to bear. Why is that? Simply because we are not yet ready to receive Jesus in his fullness, as he is. We look around at our world in distress, and more often than not expect something else, a Jesus made in our image. Somebody like the Terminator, or another Rambo, or a High Plains Drifter. Our cultural art shows off our dystopian fears as well as our hopes.

Jesus speaks with his disciples about how it will be in the end, if the people persist in the way upon which they seem to be insisting. He says if people wish for, even expect apocalyptic and terrible things—famine, war and disaster—apocalyptic things are what they will create for themselves. But all along, Jesus has been offering something else, something better, should they become strong enough to receive it. "It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men and women."

What Jesus offers as cure is himself, the one who is love stronger than death, and who is mercy stronger than wrath. It took Julian twenty years and more to gather up and put into words her encounter with a Jesus she did not expect. All our life too is a re-training to expect and to receive this Jesus we did not expect nor sometimes even want. Forgiveness and mercy are altogether difficult things to learn to chew and swallow. In



the end, we are going to be ready to recognize and receive this love in the measure that we ourselves have become it, and in the measure we have been strengthened for it in the ordinary living of our days.

What we offer

Sr Therese OJN

Crowds of people had gone out to John the Baptizer, for one reason or another. According to the earthly order, to human measurements of greatness, this is a big indicator of someone who Matters. He is admired, seen as someone significant, influential. "Everyone went to him." He isn't in need. Yet the kingdom he had proclaimed, somewhat unwittingly, will turn such measurements upside-down.

The least in the kingdom of God, Jesus says, is greater than John. And since the disciples will ask, Jesus will go on to say who is actually the greatest in the kingdom: the one who deems themselves as needy, as insignificant, as a small child, and who may well encounter many instances of just not being Seen and not seeming to Matter. It doesn't even have to be "about a child" because Jesus uses the child as an exemplar of a principle; there are other exemplars who are also adults—the impoverished, refugees, those in prison—but a child is more extreme because it has not attained the rights of adult status. At least in terms of what many people look to for guidance, such lowliness is about as far from the greatness that John embodies as one can get.

Jesus has gone about ministering to people who themselves embody such social inconsequence. That John doesn't quite recognize this as a sign of the kingdom and has to send to ask Jesus about it is an indication that messengers do not always have a complete portfolio. A great deal rests on faith, and on the messenger's own prejudices and ideas.

As long as that is just about John the Baptizer all is well, but the problem is, the disciples are called to prepare the way for Jesus, and they still live in the world where John is the greatest ever born: a world where they must claim things, be somehow important, somehow admired, even if only to themselves.

Their preparation for the kingdom of God might not, probably won't, have the signs of effectiveness that John's did. They may well fail, both in their own eyes and in any apparent effectiveness before others. And that is the place they themselves can truly find the kingdom—not through their success, but through the little door of their own inconsequence, where, in fact, not even that can be claimed as something, where their true consequence has no resemblance to either earthly greatness or unimportance. To enter the kingdom like that may well be the best preparation for Jesus they could offer.