A Note from the Guardian

As the world may be inching closer to the pandemic's end I am reminded of Noah cautiously peering out of the ark at the receding flood, a raven ready in his hand. It flew about and returned for there was nowhere to land. Later, Noah sent a dove; she returned with a freshly-plucked olive leaf. Still later Noah sent her again and she did not return, the sign that it was safe to leave the ark.

Are we now at the raven stage, or that of the first dove, or the second? We don't know. All this uncertainty makes for a deepened comprehension of our real human frailty, now only increased by the war visited upon Ukraine. The truth of our human predicament, though, is not that we are all too human, but that we are not yet human enough.

Julian of Norwich says that to be like our Lord Jesus perfectly, that is our full salvation, and the measure of what it is to be real human beings. Clearly we have not yet arrived at our destination.

Humanity has been crucified with Christ; again and again through history we have borne the flood of the worst of our own unhealed fear and aggression and its consequences, as Jesus did. Christ has been crucified, but Love has raised him from the dead. We have not arrived at Jesus's likeness, but we are on the way. Each new distress is an opportunity to offer ourselves to the tuition of Mercy who, as Julian says, loves us and gives himself, safely leading us in his laws by the Holy Spirit, and in his Body even now bears us to heaven and presents us to the Father.

May you know the peace of Christ in this 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 nuns of the Episcopal Church.

Our widespread community of Oblates and Associates, men and women 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

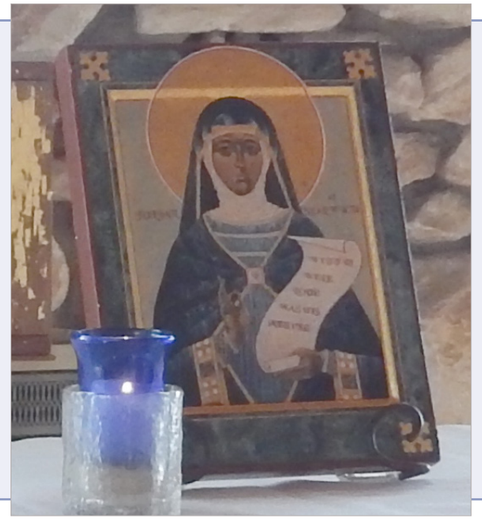
A heavy snow in March brought down some very large branches from our white pine, which we have been turning into kindling and future firewood. April melted all the snow and brought in snowdrops. The cold spring skipped a mild interim and went immediately to summer during the first weeks of May.

So far, Julianfest is on for this year, and we hope to welcome Professor Mark Burrows again (2006).

This spring, the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders superiors' meeting was once again by zoom, so Mthr Hilary spent a week of meetings on the computer. Away from the

desk, she has been at work beginning to clear our planned burial ground, and has also started a few batches of soap which will be available this summer.

Our Julian's Day celebrations in May included some time discussing the issues of reconciliation and how Julian's texts offer some approaches to the question. This issue's single article is a community effort based on those discussions.



You were remembered with joy and thanksgiving in a novena of masses beginning on St Julian's Day 8 May

Clockwise from bottom left: Surveying tree damage • Repairing the garden icon • The house and woods between two storms • Two of our local community

From the Refectory 2021-2022

Nicholas Black Elk: Medicine Man, Catechist, Saint	Jon Sweeney
You're Not Listening: What We're Missing & Why it Matters	Kate Murphy
The Sound of Life's Unspeakable Beauty	Martin Schleske
Benedictine Options	Patrick Henry
The Gospel Mysticism of Ruth Burrows: Going to God with Empty Hands	Michelle Jones

Julian & the work of reconciliation

By his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus has irreversibly joined heaven and earth, reconciling humanity to God, and drawing all people to himself in love. Jesus continues this ministry of reconciliation through his body, the Church; it is the primary work we have been given to do on earth in Jesus's name. St Paul neatly summarizes all this, telling the Church that in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. We are to carry on doing what Jesus did and is still doing through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

But this work of reconciliation requires some practical work of us, and some of it may be very costly. For it does not happen in a land of abstraction, but in the fabric and sufferings of our lives.

The several appearances of the risen Jesus to his disciples also give us to understand that reconciliation is not so much an event as a process. The disciples spent the rest of their lives working out the implications of all that happened to Jesus and to themselves, and we are still undergoing this discovery today.

What does it mean to bring and to be an agent of the reconciliation of Jesus, each in our own specific, often extremely painful circumstances? If the work of reconciliation is throwing open the door to a house where all can live together in peace, building that house requires a lot of preparatory work.Before we can seek reconciliation with another, another kind of reconciliation is first needed, and that is healing within ourselves.

In *With Pity Not With Blame*, Fr Robert Llewelyn recounted a story from 1974 of a man seeking peace from wartime turmoil, who found it at the Julian Shrine in Norwich. He found it because, in a vision, the man who had been the cause of his wounding and turmoil was brought by Julian, and the two were reconciled.

With the long-suffering man at the Julian Shrine and his opposite, Julian effects a reconciliation by apparition, in a vision. But Julian also has help for the rest of us who are struggling to build the house of peace that will be. The writing contained within her text, the *Revelations of Divine Love* can offer substantial, considered, and elementary recourse for the trauma of those whose lives have been broken or changed by the sins of others.

Julian notes that the cause of our turmoil, sorrow, and misery, is our blindness and inability to see God always. Her many references to *seeing* and *perceiving* point to a process of conversion inherent in moving from paying attention to what is harmful to us to what is most beneficial to us—from a "blinded" and obsessive attention to sin and ourselves (or others) in our misery and pain, to attention and contemplation of God's mercy for us and for others.

An important need in the work toward reconciliation is a new and healing way of approaching our entire situation, especially when one has lived a long while with the seemingly unchangeable reality of one's own pain. So the first fundamental shift at the heart of Julian's method is the skill of learning to see our situation in the light of God's love.

One thing that always blinds us is the general obsession to judge and condemn. As Julian chose to remain with the crucified Christ, we may *remain* with terrible suffering, with unbearable tension, and at least *desire to desire* not to judge or condemn. This desire is a movement toward trust in God's greater care, providence, and wisdom.

Jesus wants for us to be wholly like himself in all things, and this includes *seeing* as he sees us. While we may desire to regard our sin and weakness with what Julian calls the "three medicines: contrition, compassion, and a holy longing for God," our lack of consistency in this means that, simply regarding our own sinfulness, we are troubled, and disturbed, and hindered" (chapter 76).

Julian also underlines how we are both safe and becoming saved in the process of becoming "perfectly like our Lord" which "is our true salvation and our utmost bliss" (ch77). Yet part of this work is being

"broken" of our wrath. Breaking and sundering sound terrible, but this is not a work of punishment or anger because these qualities are not in God (ch46) but in us. Instead, as Julian understood, this "breaking" is a work of cure, of prevenient grace and healing that is already part of Christ's Passion. We can readily identify this breaking and suffering with our trauma and our suffering, which is what Julian does.

In the context of what Julian saw about sin, God's lack of blame, and God's work in us, our need for contrition is our part in accepting responsibility for our failures and sin. Our compassion for ourselves in our sin is taking part in God's compassion for us. Our being "broken" from our "empty passions and vicious pride," (ch28) our seeing "truly that in ourselves we are nothing at all but sin and wretchedness […] through contrition and grace, [being] sundered from everything which is not our Lord" (ch78), is one with the "humbling" of Christ's Passion where we both find Christ's compassion for us, and his suffering with us (ch28). What this means to us in our suffering from another person's sin is to make fully clear to us that God does not blame us for our suffering or our response to our suffering, and that in Christ God is already at work in our suffering.

The first part of this, the first step, is learning to see life in God's presence. To see God at work in all things and to see things in God's presence asks of us the contrition of being aware of our sin, because contemplation of God comes from compunction/ repentance/awareness of our weakness and need. This compunction is not complete without welcoming God's tenderness toward us as compassion, and expressing longing for God in recognition of our incompletion. All these things meet in what is essentially a contemplative regard, and what comes from this is mercy. As we become able to be present to ourselves in our suffering, and to give mercy to ourselves in the honest memory of both our own sinfulness and our own trauma, we also become able to be present and to live in God's merciful presence. As our life becomes *contemplative* in this way, we become able to perceive God in more and more things. Importantly, this is a work of faith: we do not need to knowingly perceive God, only to *seek* God.

It will be noticed that *forgiveness* has not been mentioned as something we need to do right now. This is because moving to a new way of seeing is still preparatory to forgiveness in human terms. Before we are ready to love our enemies (Luke 6:27) or forgive those who wrong us (Matthew 18:21), our first need is to humbly confess *all* of our need (Luke 18:13), which we cannot know the extent of. Essentially we are asked to enter an entirely different paradigm not based on human standards of wrath—where "forgiveness" means amnesty—to a new paradigm of mercy and grace where "forgiveness" means healing. The fact that God offers *us* "forgiveness without justice" for our healing means that God knows more about our situation than we can possibly grasp.

The one who lives in the contemplative regard of mercy lives in the humility of their ignorance of themselves and others, the incompletion of true knowledge and thus of love. We do not know ourselves fully, and so cannot love ourselves fully. The most we can do in all honesty is to recognize our frailty and ignorance with mercy and tenderness, and do the same for others, of whom we know even less.

Like the contemplative regard of mercy which fosters it, conversion of heart is not a done deal, it is a work taken up again each day, until it becomes something so living and so life-giving that we cannot consider doing without it. As Julian saw, God wants us to live in longing and rejoicing, and to do all we can to live that way (ch82). God's love for us never changes; our difficulty is all due to "a failure of love on our part" (ch37), and God is always working to turn everything to our profit.

The three medicines/remedies together with living in the contemplative regard of mercy are ways that we, too, with God's help, can make all kinds of contrariness very beneficial to ourselves and others. It is never a finished process, and we fall and fail over and over. But we can always begin again.