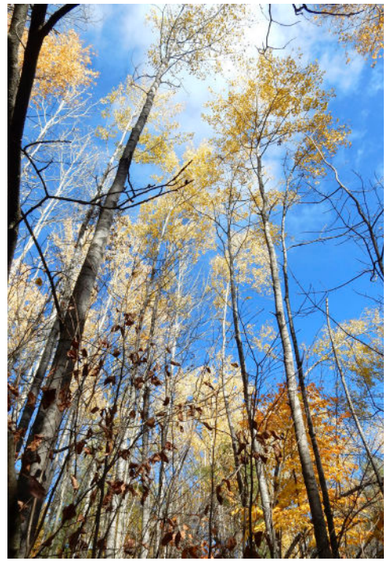
*A Note from the Prioress*



*"The heaven of heavens is the Lord's, but he entrusted the earth to its peoples."* Ps. 115:16 (BCP 1979)

If this is indeed the holy division of labor, we might well ask with Julian of Norwich how the earth, so small and fragile, can hold together as it does when time and again one human-caused distress makes the news only to be displaced by still another. And we would receive the same answer as she, "All that is made lasts and always will because God loves it." More than that, Julian says that God made humankind for love, and for the same love wished to become human. God so desires us and desires our good that he came in Jesus to be one of us, to share our lot and to show us bodily how humanity is done, what Love looks like in real life. It is this Love that now "speaks everywhere," that, if we are willing to hear and attend, will turn our hearts and strengthen our hands and lightening us, light our world.

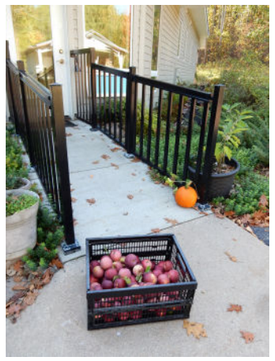
As you will see at the top of this page, we have changed the title we use for the superior of the Order from "Guardian" to "Prioress" in order to conform our usage more closely with the Benedictine tradition that we were founded in.

The Sisters of the Order of Julian pray you, our readers and friends, a blessed and hope-filled Christmastide.

Yours in Jesus and Julian,

M. Hilary, OJN

Prioress
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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The Order of Julian of Norwich
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USA

## Community Notes

After a quiet summer, and a very quiet annual retreat in September, the heavy rain of acorns signalled a mast year. This was almost all the "rain" we had until late September, when rain began at last and, with only a few pauses, continued through September and October.

And after such a quiet summer, with much waiting for projects to happen, everything began to happen in October. A crew of folks came over from the nearby Christian Bible College on several days to help split the large pile of wood after the logs were cut up.

The wood-splitting ended up literally in the background of a much larger project: the beginning of our long-planned solar installation for this property. This 14 kW ground-mount is a grid-tie being built by Northwind Solar of Stevens Point and—weather and Wisconsin Public Service permitting—should provide for nearly all our electric needs (we're just not sure when it will be turned on).

Also in October, M Hilary spoke at the Walsingham festival at Grace Church, Sheboygan, and attended Diocesan Convention. This fall an aspirant visited us for a discernment retreat of several weeks.

*Clockwise from lower left: Splitting wood • Stages of the solar installation • Returning from our semi-weekly walk*

Part of the quiet and waiting this summer involved dealing with issues with our online shop, which was mostly inoperative for a few months. It is up and running again if you would like to order anything. Continuing the celebration of the 650th anniversary of Julian's Showings, we are getting more new Julian books in our shop, including the two reviewed in this issue.

### All Shall Be Well: Poems for Julian of Norwich • Sarah Law, Ed. •

**Amethyst Press • pp 120 • ISBN:** 979-8-3928-1600-2

Julian has attracted the interest of several poets in the past century; this anthology, however, is a collection of newer contemporary poets. For the 650th anniversary of Julian's Showings, Julian scholar Sarah Law has gathered 64 poems from 57 contributors which "[show] how widely Julian is appreciated, and how she inspires us in different ways." Including an introduction, this large-format anthology highlights poets from around the world including Wisconsin poet Angela Hoffman, James Harpur, Hannah Lucas, Johanna Caton OSB, Mark S Burrows, Jeffrey Essmann, Marjorie Maddox, Frances Presley, Laura Varnam, Susan Delaney Spear, and many others. Their work offers "a renewed connection with Julian's spirituality of witness, authenticity, and joy."

### Julian of Norwich's Literary Legacy • Luke Penkett • DLT • pp 173 •

**ISBN:** 978-1-9136-5780-2

This title concerns only the study of Julian's Short Text, *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman*—a text often overlooked by many readers of Julian. Penkett chose to leave aside the examination of scriptural references to focus on a rewarding study of Julian's language and literary/cultural echoes. In chapters on Julian's literary background, rhetorical techniques, the style and genre of *A Vision*, and its first readers and listeners, this book shows in detail his careful listening to its language. There is much rich linguistic detail: frequent comparisons with contemporary texts, the "nine main characteristics of syntax for which Julian is best known," the twenty-two types of rhetorical devices she employs in *A Vision*, the vocabulary of *A Vision*—Penkett looks at "a few dozen Middle English words of philological interest which Julian uses"—and a brief examination of dialectology.

If you love and enjoy language, you will probably find this book a delight. It ably demonstrates how the devices employed in *A Vision* enable "the eye and the ear [to] become aware that they are being drawn to something important, or significant, or both." Penkett envisions a (necessarily) larger study dedicated to Julian's Long Text (the *Revelations*). In this study, he demonstrates how Julian "has an easy command of syntax and rhetoric in which she introduces not only her own but others' late fourteenth century neologisms, in a style and indeed a genre betraying what she heard during church services and probably, too, through her window to the outside world, and producing a work that was soon to attract the attention of many others who not only read carefully but also listened attentively to her words."

# Pilgrimage to Walsingham

Mthr Hilary OJN

If you look at whatever wayfinding app is on your cell phone, there you are, the little blue dot, or the little arrow-shaped triangle. Whereas with older mapping technology the traveller moved relative to the fixed boundaries of the page, now the page, as it were, moves relative to the central position of the traveller. At last, at last, you, the little dot, the little pointing triangle, you are now just what the serpentine whisperer in the garden of Eden has always told us. You are the central point around which the rest of the universe turns; everything else is relative to your own unique position in the universe. So how about that? We have finally arrived, right back at infancy.

But at a deeper, as yet uncolonized level of our being, we know this arrangement not to be true. We might be the center of the known universe as far as our navigational apps are concerned, but this only leaves us, in the end, adrift in space, our north star just our own dim selves, untethered, alienated and unaccountable.

There is still in us a homing mechanism that, despite all contrivance to the contrary, tunes in to the broadcast of the only self-consistent one, God-who-is, and pulls us around to orient to it. "Where are you?" God calls. By Mary's yes and Jesus's travail, we can locate ourselves by means of the voice of God-who-is, whom we have seen, whom we have touched with our hands, who is not the god of our fearful imagining. To make a response to that voice that draws us, to be baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus is to be propelled onto a pilgrimage, to be subject to a summons we did not invite or initiate, and to which we can only assent.

We go on pilgrimage in response to a felt need or lack in ourselves, or in response to a summons; we go on pilgrimage to honor Our Lady, to honor the saints, to push back against the Powers, to remind us of our actual and indelible relation to God and to each other. To do that we need three things. First, pilgrimage requires a healthy appreciation of our own contingency, of our real place in the universe as human beings, creatures amongst creatures. Second, pilgrimage requires a commitment to conversion; it requires us to submit to the agenda of the Magnificat. Third, pilgrimage requires a commitment to community, an orientation to Jesus who is the Church, who, as Julian says, holds within himself all those who shall be saved.

In the meantime we must bear with "where we are not yet", the places in us that have to this point resisted conversion and the evangelization of the Holy Spirit, or the places that need conversion that are not even on the horizon of our awareness yet. The Powers have great interest in militating against an awareness of this creatureliness that properly orients us to God, but it is the first essential element of pilgrimage, the terms on which we set out on the way. To be a pilgrim is, again, to bear humbly with where one is not yet, to trust in the mercy and grace of God that God is bringing one steadily into the likeness of Jesus. As pilgrims we keep an eye out for the temptations that seek to blunt the sharp edge of our fragility, to lull us back into the comfortable fiction of self-sufficiency.

Second, pilgrimage requires a commitment to conversion, a willingness to be seen, and to be taught, and to be changed—in other words to resist the lure of mere self-referential tourism. Rowan Williams says the sacraments of the Church are places where we allow God

to "get at us", to reach bodily into our lives and reorder us. Pilgrimage is the same: though we are always visible to God, we agree to the goodness of this; we agree voluntarily to remain, so to speak, a searchable database, available for comment. The five Baptismal vows we make and the Baptismal Covenant we renew at intervals explicitly speak to this commitment to conversion, to allow ourselves to be worked on, and worked in, in a word, to be healed. It is not an accident that the prayers for the baptismal candidates come directly after these vows are made; there are so many pressures upon us that make it easy to become recurved and self-referential.

And too, the Baptismal Covenant leads us to the third thing that pilgrimage requires, and that is a commitment to community. The five askings of the Covenant following the Creed are relentlessly, unequivocally exo-centric. The commitment to community and all that community life entails "together with all who shall be saved" as Julian says, is baked in to our Christian DNA; it reflects the original, goodly relationship of creature to Creator, and of creature to creature, and the patient practice of it heals the alienation and suspicion of one another that so quickly took root for our first parents in the garden.

Mary, the young woman whose courage and peaceful trust sent the all-complacent Powers into a panic, had the distinctive courage to loosen whatever grip she may have had on her notions of what her future was supposed to look like, and she asks the same of us as we walk this way in her honor. If, like Mary we have the trust and the presence of mind, the courage to say, 'Be it unto me according to your word,' then, to the glory of God, we too will be given to a future that we had not expected or asked for, but that everything has prepared us for. If we have the courage to be in that space that God opens up as though from nowhere, edged about as it is with fear and uncertainty (and, for Mary, the very real threat of annihilation) then the One who Is will be there, the One whose word makes what is not come into being. Blessedly, God is not limited to doing only what we can conceive of or imagine.

## Preparing the way

Sr Therese OJN

"What do you say about yourself?"

John the Baptizer's parameters, as offered by his questioners, are very narrow; he doesn't fit very well into the categories they have on hand. In one sense, what John says about himself is irrelevant; it is what he lives that really says who he is. To announce, to bear witness, entails not being an obstacle to the Messiah's coming, not making more of himself than he is called to be, not being seduced by the expectations or opinions of others. To prepare is to make room and welcome, but also to want to welcome, to be willing to make that space in themselves, for a coming that can produce unexpected change. This makes the twin dynamics of desire and surrender more essential to the project than knowing accepted categories. Because if anything, the business of witnessing to the light is not a matter of fitting the light into old categories, which have become rigid molds. As John's witness is the first to show, something has to give. To testify to the light can really only be done by bearing the light, by accepting the costly change it will require even to be entirely transformed by it.