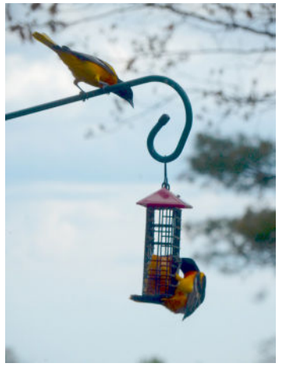
A Note from the Guardian

Throw a stone into the middle of a still pond, and you can see the ripples moving out from the impact in every direction, lapping against the shores, out and out, again and again. The seismic shock waves of the resurrection of Jesus continue to move through the world just like that, but that is only the half of it.

There is a corresponding, answering wave that moves from the edges of the pond back in to the centerpoint. The answering, returning waves of energy coming back to the point of impact could be the inclusion of more and more of humanity being brought back to God, to the center that is Jesus, alive forever, as the effects of the resurrection continue to do their hidden work.

Julian's record of Jesus's revelations to her are part of the manifestation of this resurrection energy moving out into the world, and the answering reverberation back to the centerpoint the effects of her writing bringing more and more people to a new realization of the profligate love of God for us, impossible to comprehend in its fullness. The 1940s' request of the All Hallows' Sisters to restore Julian's church and "renew her message to the world" has gone out and returned again bearing fruit a hundredfold.



May the joy of the resurrection of Jesus be with you, and carry you ever more deeply into his love. Thank you for being friends of the Order of Julian, and readers of Julian's Window.

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

Electronic Address Service Requested

Our Lady of the Northwoods Monastery
The Order of Julian of Norwich
W704 Alft Rd
White Lake WI 54491-9715
USA

Community Notes

March, as we intimated, was snowy with wet snow, though snowfalls were spread out and thus did less damage than last year. And yet, with a few feet on the ground, it all melted in one surprisingly hot week in April, which was also Easter week. Winter returned briefly before leaving (we think) in May.

During April Mother Hilary attended the leaders' meeting of CAROA at the Order of the Holy Cross in New York. The month was filled with the sounds of our neighbors splitting wood and grading our long, dimply driveway. In our turn we've been stacking wood, which will be enough for 4 winters again. The fast return to spring-summer weather also has us playing catch-up with groundskeeping work.

Our celebrations for Julian's day included reflecting on Jesus's promise that "all shall be well," and the article in this issue is the fruit of our discussion.

Since it is the 650th anniversary of Julian's Showings, many new books are coming out of the hopper, only not in time for her feast. We were able to get Elizabeth Obbard's new book (reviewed in this issue) in the shop already. Other new books on Julian will be available later this year and we anticipate reviewing a few of them.

Be sure to check out the Friends of Julian website for the online offerings that will be available throughout this year. There is a fulsome brochure available with listings of speakers and events.

Some exciting news is that this year we are finally able to begin work toward our solar energy generation project, with a larger installation than the one we built in Waukesha. And finally, after many months of busyness elsewhere, we have some soap back in shop, and hope to have all varieties on offer later this year.

And last but far from least, you were remembered with joy and thanksgiving in a novena of masses beginning Saint Julian's day, 8 May.

650 years ago, a woman named Julian had sixteen visions, and thereafter wrote about them in English. Julian was never wholly forgotten. The Long Text was first printed in the 17th century. In the 18th century some people in Norwich were confusing her with the dedication of her church. The first printing was reprinted in the 19th century. On her renown the Community of All Hallows spearheaded the rebuilding of St Julian's Norwich after World War II, and the Sisters of the Love of God prompted the 600th anniversary celebrations 50 years ago in 1973. The Anglican Church recognized her as a saint in 1980. As of 2022, the Julian bibliography surpassed 1,500 titles—in order of first appearance: anthologies, editions/translations, commentary, devotionals, poetry/hymns, images, fiction, lectures, articles, academic papers, foreign language translations, theses/dissertations, book-length studies, critical editions, plays, film, music, websites, television documentaries—nearly all in the past 50 years.

Clockwise from bottom left: Our neighbors with the grader and tractor • Ironing • Julian in a mural in Morrison's supermarket, Norwich UK

Julian of Norwich & Thérèse of Lisieux • Elizabeth Ruth Obbard • New City • pp261 • ISBN: 978-1-9050-3962-3

Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila have often been favorably compared as remarkable women and writers. But there are other saints closer to the Norwich recluse, and in fact another Carmelite Doctor, whose theology even helped prepare the way for Julian's modern popularity, has much more in common with her than Teresa. Fr Robert Llewelyn used to tell anyone who was interested that Thérèse of Lisieux was the closest modern saint to Julian; at last, someone has devoted an entire book to both of these great women side by side, with their remarkably similar teachings arrived at by quite different means. Subtitled "Two anniversaries, Two women of love, peace & mercy," its publication coincides with the 650th anniversary of Julian's Showings and the 150th anniversary of Thérèse's birth, as well as the 100th anniversary of her beatification.

Obbard's book points up the strong similarities between them, which have been noted for over a century but approached only tentatively by a few scholars. Though she does not present them as theologians, Obbard underlines the equivalence of their messages in their shared theology of God as wholly mercy and love. This book comes in three parts: a full section on Julian, speculations on her life, and presenting her message; a full section on Thérèse, her (very well-documented) life, and her message; and a meditative rosary integrating excerpts from the writings of each. Presented simply and gently, with the pastoral directness and lack of polemic which characterizes both of these great teachers, Obbard's book will be appreciated by lovers of these saints but may also serve as an introduction to both, as well as an invitation to prayer with their texts. We have hardly yet scratched the surface of the wealth these two saints uniquely share; Obbard's book offers a way in.

Julian's texts are both quoted and misquoted as often as any popular author, but of all misquotations, perhaps none is more so than the phrase "all shall be well." In the usual, most widespread misquoting, these words are attributed not to Christ who spoke them, but to Julian herself. Sometimes it is taken as a kind of cliché indicating "things will turn out okay even in the short term." This phrase is often immediately associated by some, implicitly or even explicitly, with universal salvation. Perhaps it may be, if by means inconceivable to us. Yet Julian's contribution is not the *assurance* that all will be made well, but that *how* this will happen must be left with God. She insists that the harder we try to find out the means of what she simply calls God's great deed—whatever it may be in its specific content or contours—the farther we will be from knowing it (ch 33).

In chapter 27 the first "all shall be well" was spoken in reference to sin and suffering, and repeated regarding the pain of sin and God's lack of blame for us in Christ: "These words were said most tenderly, showing no manner of blame to me nor to any that shall be saved." This revelation ultimately set Julian on a long theological excursion through the issue of forgiveness and wrath. Meanwhile, she was preoccupied with what seemed the nearer, insoluble matter of God making all things well if the church also taught that some would be damned eternally.

The words "all shall be well" are repeated throughout the *Revelations* not because Julian was a sunny optimist, but because she was distressed by her failure to reconcile the vision she received of God's lack of anger or condemnation and that of the teaching of the church. She had to be reassured of this more than once, and repeated this reassurance more than once: "Our good Lord answered *all the questions and doubts that I could raise*, saying most comfortingly, 'I may make all things well; I can make all things well, and I will make all things well, and I shall make all things well; and you will see for yourself that all manner of things shall be well,'" (ch 31, emphasis added). This comfort was not enough; Julian continued to struggle to accept this assurance: "...considering all this, it seemed impossible to me that all manner of things should be well, as our Lord revealed at this time. And to this I received no other answer by way of revelation from our Lord except this: 'What is impossible to you is not impossible to me. I shall keep my word in all things, and I shall make all things well'" (ch 32).

Even this only momentarily resolved the issue; once Julian got started on the related quandary of the church's teaching about sin and God's lack of blame for us, she required yet another answer, and God gave it. But this time the answer was not a phrase to misquote, but something far more challenging to our tendency to want to resolve matters by cut-and-dried analysis.

To her further questioning about the human predicament and its ultimate solution, Julian said she was given no other answer by the Lord than his showing of the vision of a lord who has a servant. Running eagerly to do his lord's will the servant falls into a deep ditch taking great hurt, feeling and seeming utterly bereft. But he is not abandoned by the lord who sent him, far from it. The lord looks on the servant constantly, with pity and not with blame. The conclusion Julian comes to after many years of rumination is that the Second Person of the Trinity takes the part of the servant in Jesus, "the second Adam," falling with humanity into the ditch of our condition of sinfulness, never leaving us until by his travail he

has fetched us up into everlasting safety. Coming as it does in pictorial rather than verbal form, the format of this showing gently questions Julian's thirst for analytical certainty (and by extension, ours) giving only the answer of Jesus's abiding presence with fallen humanity, come what may. The parable is inseparable from "all shall be well" because it was given Julian as an answer to what she longed to know regarding her impossibility of reconciling God's lack of blame and the church's teaching. The parable is, among other things, an "explanation" in narrative image of how this can be so.

Julian derived two critical understandings of the promise "all shall be well," both related to how the way we view things and the way God views them differ both in degree and in kind. One is the fact that everything matters to God: God will make even the "smallest" effects of sin well. The other is the fact of our failure to see how evil and harm could ever be resolved toward good, and our tendency to fixate on it without recourse to faith in God. Julian identified the cause of this failure as the "blind, base, and uninformed" use of our reason that leaves us unable to "recognize the high, marvellous wisdom, the power and the goodness of the blessed Trinity" (ch 32).

This is not much comfort to us, for this limitation—that something should be impossible for us to understand, let alone to do—is something we are hardly willing to accept. We want to find a solution that would be "possible" for us, at least possible to explain. We are not willing to accept our *lack* of wisdom, and it is a failure that often leads us to wrath and to injury of ourselves or others. This failure may also be what is behind the persistent misreading that attributes the saying not to Christ but to Julian and to a particularly durable optimism she would seem to possess. On the other hand, our inability to understand it makes it easier to relegate ultimate wellness to a salvation beyond a span of time that can readily be imagined, and to which we can be expected to have no real contribution.

In that respect, this promise can be considered from another angle, that of human agency in the short term and our perception of the parameters of "all shall be well." It is promised originally to Julian in relation to sin and the suffering caused by sin. Facing as we do all manner of personal, societal, ecological, economic and other crises, one upon another, nearly all of human manufacture, we cannot see how this will work. Yet that "all this will be made well" is not license to either consider it impossible—simply a bit of wishful thinking by Julian—or to fold our hands and do nothing. If we are complacently accepting and tolerating sinful structures of whatever kind, allowing some to benefit, while others bear the cost, as Christians we still on the simplest and most necessary level are called to address the sin in ourselves by repentance and by loving each other as Christ has loved us.

In answering "all the questions and doubts" Julian could raise, God gave her a fivefold "all shall be well" for us "to be enfolded in rest and in peace" (ch 31). This rest and peace is not a static passivity but the ground of the most creative and confident initiative possible. All this has an echo in the resurrection appearances of Jesus we celebrate in this season, that cannot be dismissed as the constructions of some over-optimistic disciples. The disciples then and now are left, as Julian was, with the answer of abiding presence apprehended by faith and not by sight, a faith ever afterward defiant of strictly rational exposition, inviting us to continue to work in his presence, and to trust that, in Christ, our work to love each other will not be in vain.