A Note from the Guardian

"We give you thanks, O God, we give you thanks, calling upon your name and declaring all your wonderful deeds" (Psalm 75:1)

The word for today is gratitude — gratitude for the timely provision of our material needs at the monastery, and for the wide and deep community of love and prayer that we are a small part of. And I suggest, gratitude is a good word to take with us as food for the journey into the Lenten season.

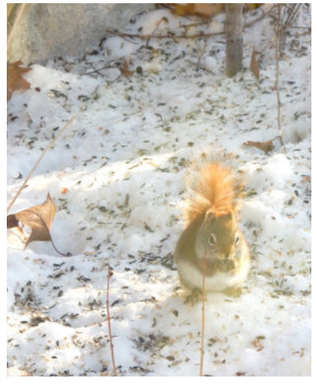
The many large and terrible world events reported daily in the news can blind us to a reality much more pervasive and close to home. And that is simply that we are, every one of us, looked upon and loved by God who created all things and keeps all things in being simply by the force of that love. Whatever befall, nothing can disappear from God's grasp,or knowledge or keeping. There is no place nor time, now or in the future that can be outside of God's presence, no condition of being that can separate anyone from God's love. God's love and God's presence are inescapable.

And that is the grace of our journey through Lent. We can safely and with unashamed gratitude explore the condition of our interior landscape by the light of mercy because God's love will never leave us, nor cease from the work of interior restoration that God's love so desires.

The nuns of the Order of Julian pray you a blessed and hope-filled Lent, that you may welcome the risen Jesus with joy on Easter Day.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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The Order of Julian of Norwich
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Community Notes

This winter revolved around snow, ice, equipment breakdowns, and gifts. We'll start with the largest which was that, thanks to all your gifts, the mortgage has been paid off!

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you!

In this issue we usually like to put in spring flowers—what is happening elsewhere at this hour—but winter merited some more photos. Our snow began in November but was diffuse until mid-Advent, when it came down in spectacular ice-enhanced displays.

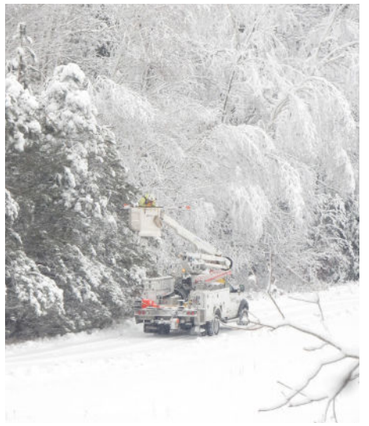
The first storm caused a 34-hour power-outage that fell a few days before our generator was repaired, and we partook of the cold and darkness with all our neighbors. Fortunately, most of us up here have wood heat as well as electric, and we kept the masonry heater going, especially as we can cook in it. We were prepared with water and lights, and lots of socks, and were grateful when the power was restored and the generator was repaired. The gas oven, aged out of use, was due to be replaced last fall and this was finally done in January.

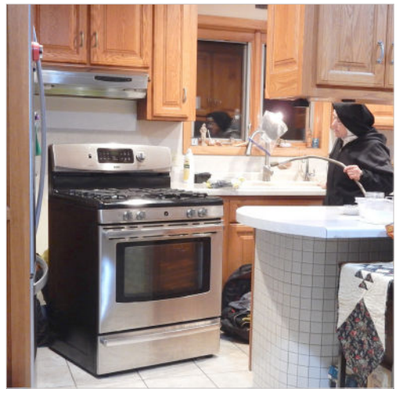
Our equally aged copier (unexpectedly) ran off its last copy in mid-Advent and was also replaced near the end of Epiphany.

The ice that preceded the snow made the woods stunningly beautiful for weeks, but all the beauty for us made life difficult for wildlife. We haven't seen the feeder so busy in years; the birds have been at the feeders constantly since Christmas.

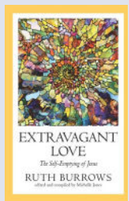
In late January Mthr Hilary went to our affiliate priors' meeting in Racine, and they took an instructive field trip to visit the DeKoven Center where the order first lived in Wisconsin.

Because of the CSA we don't currently have a veg garden, but if we're not looking at seed catalogues we are looking at other projects for this year. Enough funds were left over after the mortgage for us to think about replacing missing insulation in the house, something we hope to get started this year. We also plan to have the guesthouse fully open later in the year. Please pray for our monastic aspirants who are visiting us meanwhile!





Clockwise from lower left: Shoveling the path after a storm • New soap drying trays built by our neighbor Patrick • Linemen removing branches from power lines along our driveway after a December storm • M Hilary assisting the removal of the gas oven • Assembling cabinets for the archives



Extravagant Love: The Self-Emptying of Jesus • Ruth Burrows • Paulist Press •

pp75 • ISBN: 978-0-8091-5580-4

This tiny book of twenty brief chapters is the fruit of a relationship of many years between the author and the Sisters of Jesus of Nazareth, an emerging contemplative community in Chegutu, Zimbabwe. Some chapters in fact, are very dense and some extremely short. Burrows "draws together scriptural and theological insights and her own lived experience of over seventy years as a Carmelite nun" offering, not a treatise on God's kenosis, but a meditation which indicates "half-opened doors" toward "God's self-giving, ecstatic love."

The heart of the book might be Burrows's emphatic insistence that our human poverty and need, our inadequacy and our limitations, is spiritually our greatest treasure: "If only we could grasp that our own poverty echoes that of Jesus how we would love it, realizing that it is our greatest treasure! We would cease longing for 'signs and wonders,' what we think are proof of God's interest in us, of his presence and closeness to us. Inevitably, we form ideas of holiness, of what it feels like to be close to God, and we are troubled and discontented because we do not feel holy or even good but see ourselves shabby, sinful, and still worldly." Those familiar with Julian's writing will be able to pick up resonances in Burrows's response to this common misconception.

Burrows's concision and density make this a book well suited for its purpose as "a study booklet to provoke and stimulate prayerful pondering, either individually or in community discussion."

Gift & Mission

David Carlson AOJN

The one common characteristic of members of the Order of Julian would seem to be this: we have all had a life-changing encounter with Christ through St. Julian's *Showings.* This is neither obvious nor automatic. There are specialists in the field of mystical experience who know a great deal about Julian of Norwich's psychology but who would not claim to have encountered the divine through her writings. Similarly, there are undoubtedly historians, experts on 14th century England or scholars of the religious currents in Europe in that period, who know Julian's writings intimately. But rigorous scholarship can demand an objectivity that makes personal epiphanies rare.

From the *Showings,* it is clear that Julian hoped that her experiences would not be treated with such detachment. What was revealed to her was what she wanted readers to understand had been given to them through her.

Julian makes this clear in many places in *Showings,* but most clearly in chapter 6 of the short text: "Everything that I saw about myself I mean to apply to all my fellow Christians, for I am taught that this is what our Lord intends in this spiritual revelation." Later in the same chapter, Julian writes, "And you who hear and see this vision and this teaching, which is from Jesus Christ for the edification of your souls, it is God's will and my wish that you accept it with as much joy and delight as if Jesus had shown it to you as he did to me […] and I am sure that I saw it (her vision) for the profit of many others." And again in chapter 7 of the short text: "For in all this I was humbly moved in love toward my fellow Christians, that they might all see and know the same as I saw, for I wished it to be a comfort to them all as it is to me; for this vision was shown for all men, and not for me alone."

We who are members of the Order of Julian can attest that Julian is absolutely right in saying this. The gift Julian was given she has passed on to us, which raises the question, "What are we to do with the gift we have received through Julian?"

I invite you to recall the one, two, or three revelations of Julian that spoke so powerfully to you that your life has never been the same afterwards. For me, three of Julian's revelations forever changed my understanding of the Cross: there is no wrath in God; Jesus has compassion on us because of our sin; and Jesus would willingly and gladly have suffered more for us if that were possible. You may have other revelations from Julian that remain for you "living water" to which you return again and again.

These favorite revelations from Julian are treasures beyond price. But again, we face the question: For what purpose were we given these treasures?

On the road to Damascus, St. Paul was given the greatest gift possible—Jesus' assurance of forgiveness. But in that same moment, St. Paul was given a mission. The gift that he received—being forgiven by God outside the law—led him to preach the same message to Gentiles—in Christ, God has forgiven us "outside the law." Paul's gift became his mission.

Could the same not be true for us as well? Do the revelations of Julian that changed our lives contain a mission that we are to live out? In a world where many people are weighed down by the belief that God is full of wrath at them for their failings, how can we incarnate the revelations to Julian that there is no wrath in God, that Jesus faces us sinners with compassion, and that Jesus loves us so much that He would gladly suffer more for even one sinner?

If we see a world starving for a message of such immense forgiveness, do we not "take God's revelations to Julian in vain" if we do not treat those who sin against us with the same compassion and yes, even with a willingness to suffer for them?

Although we would wish it otherwise, the truth is that most of the people in the world will never hear of Julian of Norwich much less read Julian's *Showings*. They will only meet Julian and her message *through us*.

The work of Lent

Mthr Hilary OJN

What do you seek is Jesus's oft-repeated question in the Gospels, and Jesus continues to ask it of us. What do you seek? What is it that you want most? In Lent we get the gift of space and time to look deeply into this question.

Jesus famously said to Julian, "Sin is behovely"—that is, inevitable—"but all shall be well."

Whatever our habitual sins, they can actually be allies in answering that question Jesus puts to us. If we can stand back a bit and look at the behavioral evidence at hand we can allow our deepest desires, as far as we can articulate them, to gently interrogate our actions and reactions to present reality. What do these tell us about what it is we really want? What clues do these awkward things give about the mysterious depths of ourselves?

Often what we really want isn't even completely clear to us, nor easy to articulate. Before she was even "Julian of Norwich," all unsuspecting but with a half-remembered long-ago desire for a comprehension of Jesus's passion floating in the background, the woman we now call Julian was suddenly struck down by a mortal illness. In the extremity of that illness, Jesus speaks to her from the crucifix. Again and again across the whole series of the sixteen revelations he gives her, Jesus in effect asks Julian, *What is it that you seek? What is the real nature of your desire that you made known to me so long ago?* And in the back and forth of their conversation and the visions, Julian's increasing comprehension of what she is seeing and hearing become more sure-footed at the same time as her desire—what she really wants to know from Jesus—gets more well-defined, more sharp, even more desperate.

In that encounter with the crucifix, Jesus meets Julian where she is, but at the same time is bringing her to a radically new understanding of himself, of the purposes of God, and to new clarity about her own deepest questions. Whatever Julian originally expected from a vision of Jesus's passion, her meeting of Jesus in the sixteen showings was a continual round of surprise and reappraisal. This is what Lent invites us to. *What do you seek?*