A Note from the Prioress

In the late 1970's Episcopalians in America began to discover the contemplative dimension of Christianity in a big way, possibly as a natural corrective to overly activist, corporate models of the life and ministry of the Church. But what is the contemplative life, anyway? Especially when it appears in so many different forms?

Julian at year 651 is still yielding her riches, and the very circumstance of her Showings gives us a clue. In the midst of a perilous illness, Julian is suddenly invited by an image of the crucified and bleeding Jesus into conversation, and to discern his meaning—all love—in the beholding of his and of our own woundedness. In *Living Wisdom*, Cristiana Piccardo connects such beholding with mercy and truth:

> The remembrance of mercy is the savor of truth in every circumstance. It signals the perception that God's mercy is present in every time and space of the human condition. Only through intense personal experience of this fact will we be led to pass from an arrogance that is easily scandalized, that sits in judgment on others, to a merciful compassion and openness to others. This is when our life becomes *contemplative*, a space charged with God's living Presence, a manifestation of saving Mercy.

Contemplative life, for Julian, is all response, all yes, to the invitation that Jesus holds out to her. She discerns in herself, and in the whole fragile created order, the merciful working of Jesus to bring all that is not yet well to wholeness and truth. To allow ourselves, by beholding, to become that merciful space in response to Jesus's invitation: that is to live a contemplative life.

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. With our widespread community of Oblates and Associates, women and men of diverse Christian denominations, we are 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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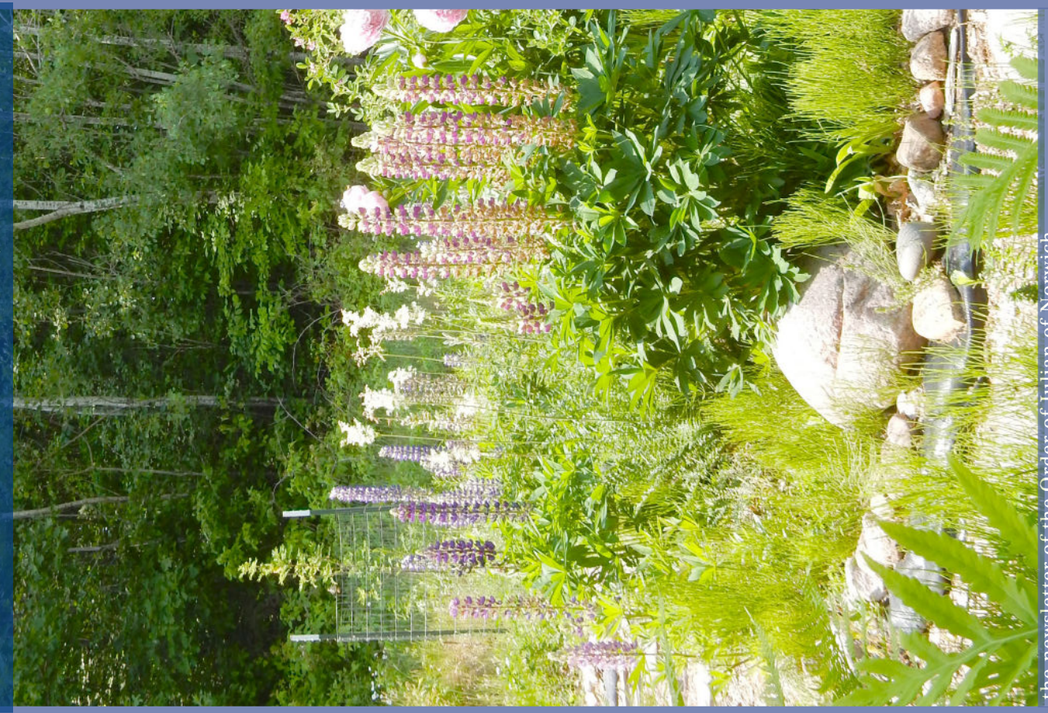
the newsletter of the Order of Julian of Norwich



Electronic Address Service Requested

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W704 Alft Rd
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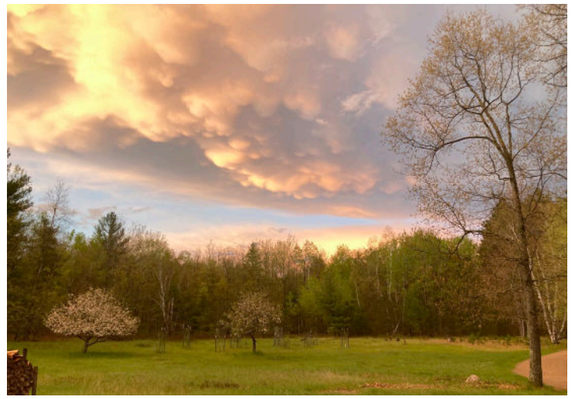
Community Notes

Many of you got too much snow in the past months; in our corner of Wisconsin our northern hemisphere winter consisted of drought; this made "spring" come early but it also meant that, without constant snowcover, spring was very drawn out and erratic. The frost melted six weeks earlier than normal, so that even when there was no precipitation, the gravel driveway remained wet. True spring finally arrived, still a few weeks early, in May. We hope to make up for the lack of snow with some good rain this season; so far, the grass for hay is making good headway.



After some final tweaking and troubleshooting, the solar panels are running properly.

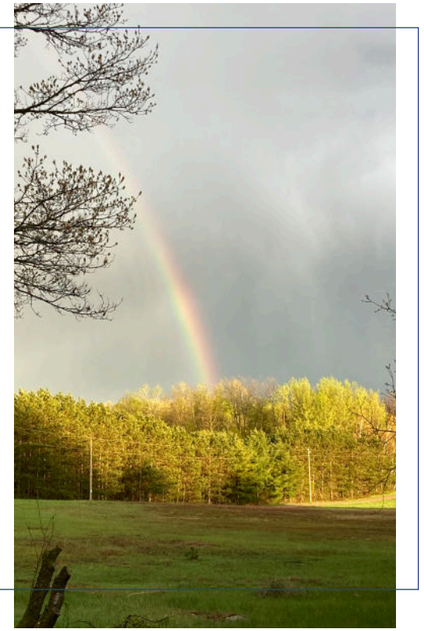
As we write, nearly all the birds have returned for the season. Being part of the world means that other animals often consider your home as available real estate, or at least always open for dropping in—something particularly true in the National Forest. One young bird literally dropped in: a corvid fledgling came down the chimney and ended up in the heater bench. To remove the (very puzzled and sooty) visitor required some chiseling of tile, but it got on its way safely and will probably (we hope) not make a repeat appearance.

In early May, Mthr Hilary attended a special Convention of the three Wisconsin dioceses and caught up with friends and affiliates from across Wisconsin.

Our Annual General and Senior Chapter was held shortly after Julian's Day. Some of our reflections from our Julian's Day celebrations are included in the article in this issue.

A surprise and a highlight of incidental early-morning stargazing this May was the aurora borealis, which for us was ornamented by a fly-by of the International Space Station.

You were remembered in a novena of masses for the feast of Saint Julian 8 May



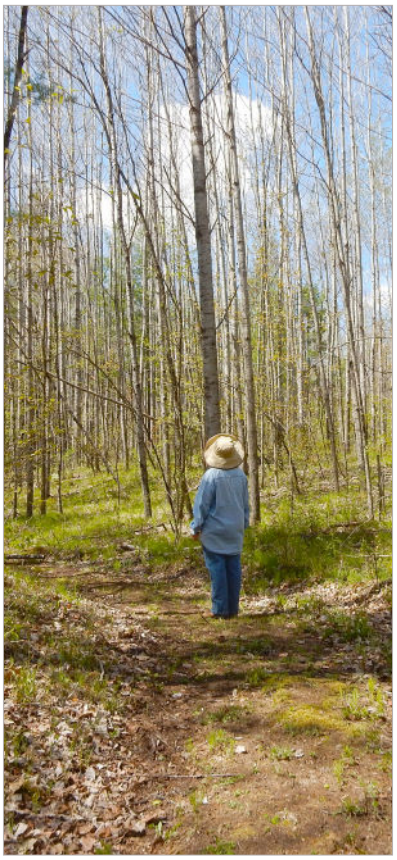
Clockwise from lower left: Two groundhog sub-gardeners, weeding clover • Our intrepid visitor prior to rescue • Storm clouds at sunset • The Julian icon in the chapel on Julian's Day • The rainbow ends in … Shawano?

From the refectory 2022-2023 (sic)

Tradition and Apocalypse: *An Essay on the Future of Christian Belief*	David Bentley Hart
Orwell's Roses	Rebecca Solnit
The Julian Lecture 2022: *Julian of Norwich & Ecological Consciousness*	Claire Foster-Gilbert
On Savage Shores: *How Indigenous Americans Discovered Europe*	Carolyn Dodds Pennock
On the Threshold of the Future: *The Life & Sprituality of Mother Mary Joseph Rogers*	Claudette La Verdiere
We Are the Middle of Forever: *Indigenous Voices from Turtle Island on the Changing Earth*	ed. Dahr Jamail & Stan Rushworth

Seeing & Knowing

We reach Julian in the Long Text long after she has spent several years grappling with what she was shown: she sees the pattern of the Showings that to us is sometimes a tangle of nice quotes and theoretical digressions. She had sixteen Showings, but, as we know from the wrestling in her writing, this was not a prosaic matter of starting at the beginning and going on until she got to the end, but a challenge to any implicit poverty of faith, kicked off by the Showing of "God in a point" and coalescing in the problem of sin, blame, and her conclusions about God's forgiveness.



Substance and sensory being

By the time Julian writes about the curious matter of our "substance" and "sensory being" in chapter 45 (through 57) she has already been mulling over all this for years, and is setting up her workshop carefully. These defining terms are two key tools on her bench and are going to be important in her project. Mentioned a few times to this point, the discussion on them properly begins after the discussion on prayer, trust, and likeness, when she is gearing up about judgment and moving toward the parable of the Lord and the servant.

Two judgments & a conundrum

Chapter 45 is a significant chapter in that regard: here, Julian begins to grind the glass that in chapter 52 she will neatly fix into a new set of spectacles. And the grinding begins with this: "God judges us according to the essence [substance] of our human nature, which is always kept united in him, whole and safe without end; and this judgment derives from his righteousness. And [human beings, including the Church] judge on the basis of our changeable sensory being…" Which leads to the first iteration of the issue and the question that will dominate chapter 50 and lead to the parable: how to reconcile these two judgments—that we are *both* grievous sinners and—God does not blame us?

Before she even gets there, though, she pauses to talk about mercy, God's lack of anger or forgiveness, and how God is continually at work in us to bring us to peace. It's not really a digression, for it both shows the nature of God's judgment and makes the contrast between the two judgments all the more profound. This in turn sharpens the requirement she makes in chapter 50: "…either I needed to see in God that sin was completely done away with, or else I needed to see in God how he sees it, so that I might truly know how I ought to see sin and what sort of blame is ours."

And it is exactly the question of *perception* and its basis in our two "levels" of being—higher/substance, lower/sensory being—that the parable she is given illumines.

Two solutions

Julian essentially finds twin solutions in the parable: one about *seeing* (perceiving), and the other about a necessary practical response.

The fallen servant has several problems but the greatest is that "he neither *sees clearly his loving lord*, who is most meek and kind to him, nor does he *truly see what he is himself in the sight of his loving lord*." Julian—having reflected on this for years—adds: "And this was a beginning to the teaching revealed to me at this time, through which I might come to know how he regards us in our own sin. And then I saw that only suffering blames and punishes, and our courteous Lord comforts and succors; he is always gladly regarding the soul, loving and longing to bring us to bliss."

Having got through a close examination of the parable, in chapter 52 Julian presents the twin solutions, as much as possible, tying into this her understanding of our unchangeable "substance" and our changeable "sensory being." It is a matter of accepting both ways of seeing/two judgments together, that both are true: "our Lord wants us to accuse ourselves exactly in this way, *willingly and truly seeing and acknowledging our fall* and all the harm that comes of that [due to our changeability], *seeing and knowing that we can never make it good*, and at the same time that we *willingly and truly see and know his everlasting love which he has for us*, and his abundant mercy." This becomes part of our healing, as she puts it in Chapter 78, "by humbly recognizing this, through contrition and grace, we shall be sundered from everything which is not our Lord, and then our blessed Saviour will perfectly heal us and unite us to himself."

This is very close to the grain of her theodicy, which she begins to unpack in the late 50s chapters; in chapter 56 she carefully notes the indivisible nature of our substance and sensory being, and the inestimable value of each: "The noble city in which our Lord Jesus sits is our sensory being, in which he is enclosed; and our natural substance is enclosed in Jesus." In chapter 57, she simply notes that while our substance is "complete," our sensory being is *deliberately* "lacking"—"and God will remedy and make good this lack through the action of mercy and grace." The "remedy" is for us to be made "perfectly like our Lord," to make "us like himself in condition as we are in nature" (chapter 41).

Here is where the two ways of seeing find their strongest practical expression: in contrition, compassion, and true longing for God. These three "medicines" for our healing become our natural response to the new vision offered by "seeing and knowing" our fallibility and God's goodness—responses, willingly taken, by which we may grow more and more into the healing of becoming perfectly like Christ.

Our joy and becoming

Julian "entered" the Showings only with the expectation that she was dying; instead, she was shown a way to live, rooted in new perception both of our being and of God's nature—and three ways to sustain that perception which are identical with the "three wounds" she had once desired. In chapter 72, she encapsulates this by framing the spectacles with the foundational teaching, encountered in all the Showings, that she has understood is the purpose of the Showings: "It is for us to have three kinds of knowledge: the first is to know our Lord God; the second is to know ourselves, what we are through him in nature and grace; the third is humbly to know ourselves with regard to our sin and weakness. And, as I understand it, the whole revelation was made for these three."