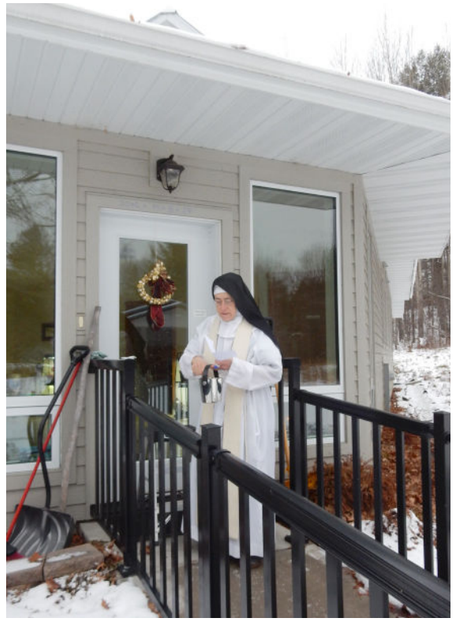
A Note from the Prioress



The picture on the cover of this issue was taken on a Saturday morning, the monastery's cleaning day, and is looking past the liturgical cowls (our chapel formal dress) into the Chapter room; the kitchen server of the week is just about to sweep and mop the floor. We meet in the Chapter room every morning following the day's Holy Eucharist to listen to a portion of our governing documents, either our own Constitution and Statutes or the Rule of St Benedict, speak of the day's doings, and end by praying together the short service of Terce.

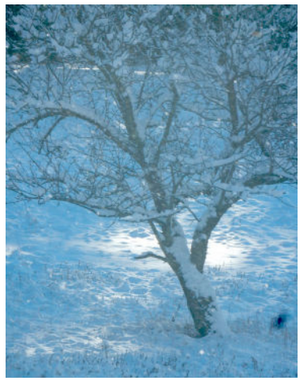
This accidental monastic still-life encapsulates our life neatly: it is a life of prayer and ordinary work, in a community of glad and loving accountability. During Lent we are invited to renew an even more mindful engagement with these practices in our life that assist us, as St Paul says, to have that mind in ourselves which is in Christ Jesus, to become love in the midst of our world. Our world just happens to start here inside a monastery.

Wherever your world begins, we pray that the invitation of Lent brings you ever more deeply into engagement with it, in love and service, in thought and care, and brings you safely to the Day of our Lord's Resurrection.

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

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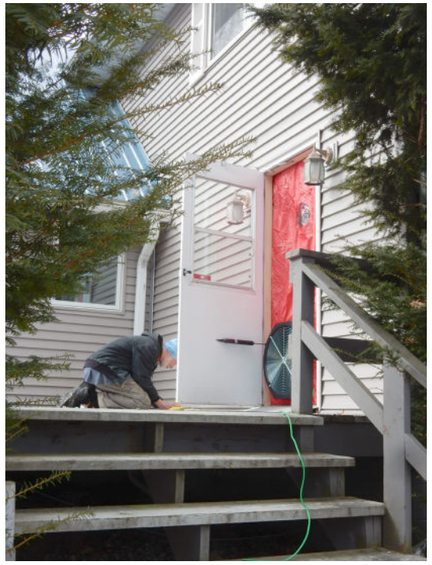
Community Notes

We've had a very dry winter this year, unlike many of you who have had too much precipitation. Last fall the solar finally got turned on in time for a few inches of snow in early Advent. Wet snow comes off the panels very quickly but otherwise we have a new form of recreation sweeping the panels, at least as much as we can reach.

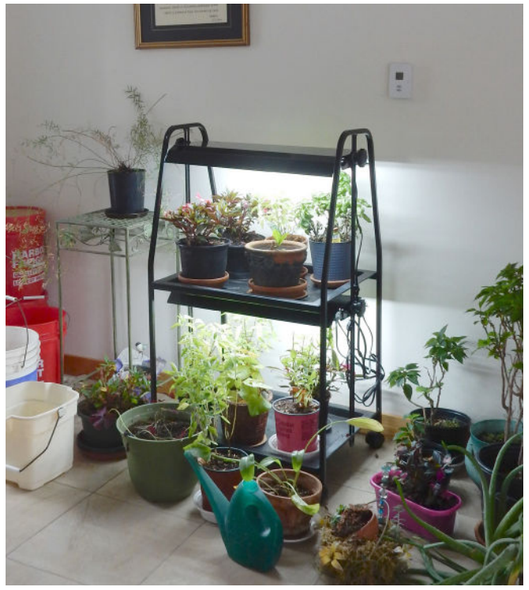
At Epiphany we had our annual house blessing and a week later some decent snow arrived. Also in January M Hilary convened the annual affiliate Priors' meeting, taking counsel with the lay leadership of Oblates and Associates.

Right before Lent was a flurry of busyness for a blower-door test. This is just what it sounds like, with a fan in a doorway, but since the air is directed out, the effect is to lower the air

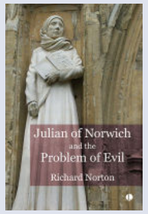


pressure in the house. The result tells us how much more insulating the house will need. The old part of the house (and its older windows) does not hold heat very well and we hope to begin some much-needed retrofitting this year.

Some other important and good changes are up for this year which we will share in coming months.



Clockwise from lower left: Assembling the blower-door • The blower door and a technician measuring the perimeter • Brushing off the solar panels • Where the houseplants vacation in winter • At work on a sewing project



Julian of Norwich & the Problem of Evil • Richard Norton • Lutterworth • pp 158 • ISBN: 978-0-7188-9615-7

Theodicy, or the "problem of evil" in theology, has not been looked at in depth with Julian as a guide, but Richard Norton opens a door on much potential study for both theodicists and Julian scholars. Arguing "that [Julian's] Revelations should be a primary resource in all approaches to the problem of evil," Norton introduces some pertinent ways in.

Inherent to Norton's contention is the thorny debate between pastoral theodicists (those seeing theodicy as necessarily and often only pastoral) and theoretical theodicists (those seeing the matter primarily in the abstract). Norton singles out three specific current issues debated between pastoral theodicists and theoretical theodicists: the theoretical context in which a pastoral theodicy becomes possible, the nature of God in relation to suffering, and the brutal, destructive suffering faced by so many particularly in the present. These three specific concerns are identified as the main points of contact with Julian's theology and where her theodicy may positively contribute to these issues. Julian will end up the heart of Norton's presentation; to get there, he first lays the groundwork, offering a representative primer of both contemporary theoretical and pastoral theodicist positions, the strengths and weaknesses of each, the definitions and place of faith, hope, and charity in the Christian life, and the relation of these to suffering and evil.

Norton is among Julian scholars who argue that Julian's use of the trope of Motherhood in God is much more than a reflection of feminine experience; he argues it is not only an integral part of her theology but particularly of her theodicy; that she uses this metaphor deliberately to emphasize the divine compassion in relation to evil; and "Christ's passion is the supreme manifestation of divine love" because it demonstrates "overwhelming compassion for all victims," especially in regard to the lack of anger in God. Julian did not get an "answer" to the *behovabil* problem of sin, and her writings cannot solve the theodocic problem. But, sifting through her teleology and eschatology, Norton indicates how the integration of Julian's theodicy into modern debates can help create a better meeting of pastoral and theoretical theodicy, yet "only if we insist with Julian that God IS Love and as such [compassionately] involved in our pains, moment by moment, no matter what."

What is love?

The Rev. Todd E. Johnson AOJN

What is love? What a vexing question! Love is so many things—and in so many different ways. Growing up in the 60s, I learned that all I needed was love, that love was the answer, and love was something my older brother fell into and out of. We were to make love not war, and love was what the world needed now, because there is just too little of it. But I also grew up in the 60s in a small, conservative Protestant church. There I learned that God was love. And God was a parent and loved with parent's love. And God loved us so much that God sent God's only Son to die for us. All of that paisley-and-tie-dyed understanding of love somehow mixed with the understanding of love I was taught in Sunday School. God's love changes lives and can change the world. At least that's how I understood God when I was about 10.

About age 12 I started confirmation. There my knowledge of God was expanded, and in some ways confused. I was taught that this loving God who I thought loved everyone and whose love could change the world was actually offended by us. We are sinful people, after all, and being sinful required some act of divine justice. God was offended—if not angry—and justice needed to be served—and possibly, God's wrath needed to be vented and appeased. How different was my heavenly parent's love than was my earthly parents' love, who taught me about learning from mistakes, admitting mistakes, and repairing broken relationships.

I became even more confused when in confirmation we learned about one of the founders of our denomination in Sweden who had a very different understanding of God's love than the pastor who was teaching our confirmation class. I think this view was presented out of some sense of obligation to our tradition, rather than theological sympathy. This was confusing in a redeeming way, however. I understood that this view was not what I was previously taught about the Cross in Confirmation, but it sounded more like what I believed before.

P.P. Waldenström (1838-1919) was a theologian within the Lutheran State Church of Sweden, a politician of some note, and a member of a lay movement within the church focusing on spiritual renewal through small groups, or conventicles. In July of 1872, Waldenström published a sermon on Matthew 13:44-46 that was never preached. But it was widely disseminated and widely read in Sweden, giving rise to our denomination. In this sermon Waldenström took on the widely held view that God changed on the Cross: God was offended and/or angry, and God's discomfort was released through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Waldenström simply asked "where is it written" in the scriptures that God changed? Instead, Waldenström argued, the biblical witness is clear, Christ's dying and rising changes *us*,

cleanses us from sin, allows us to receive God's Spirit. That sounded more like love to me, and I filed it away.

My spiritual journey has taken me on quite a theological and ecumenical adventure. But my understanding of what love is—and what God's love is—did not find much of a home in the early faith communities of which I was a part. That changed when I was introduced to Julian through an Advent retreat in 1988. There I was introduced to a wrath-less God and God whose love was a passionate love of redemption. In Chapter 22 of Julian's (longer) revelations, Jesus asks Julian if she is satisfied by Christ's suffering on the Cross as an expression of love. After responding that she was satisfied—and thankful for—by the sacrifice, Jesus continues that he would suffer more if necessary because it was a joy to manifest God's love for us in that way.

This love revealed to Julian is a passionate love, like one has for their partner, their parent, or their child. It is a self-sacrificial love that one offers gladly because one cares as much or more for the other than one cares for oneself. It is a love that almost wills the other to value their worth more than they do. This is the understanding behind the Greek word, agape, or parental love. It is a love that can form and even change a life. It is a love that has the potential, if fully activated, to change the world. It is the sort of love that could just be all you need.

One is given pause to reflect on how Julian grew to understand this over time as she reflected on the visions she was given. Of course, we have hunches about who this woman was, such as that she was a wife and mother who had lost her husband and children to any number of possible tragedies of her day. How much she would have sacrificed to keep a single one of them alive? Of course, these are musings on hunches. What we do know is how Julian concluded her reflections on these showings:

> "Be well aware: Love was God's meaning… Keep yourself in that love and you shall know more of the same, and you will never see or know any other thing else… [B]efore God made us, God loved us and this love has never diminished nor ever will be." (Chapter 86 passim)

God's eternal nature is love, and that never has, nor ever, will change. The Cross was not a high point in God's loving creation. Instead, the Paschal Mystery is the one-time revelation in human history of how much God has, God does, and God will forever love us. Thanks be to God!

When I give thanks for the writings of Julian, and for our Order which honors Julian's legacy, I give thanks for finally finding my homeland. The faith of my 10 year-old-self was quite literally a child-like faith. But it had staying power because it rang true to what I knew love to be, and what I believed a loving God must be like. Still, I had no further words for it until I encountered Julian's work. I pray I never take Julian's writings and their truth for granted, nor cease to invite people to reconsider their view of God's love expressed through the Paschal Mystery from Julian's perspective.