A Note from the Guardian

Some of the household prayers that punctuate the monastery's day have a short tag added to the end of them, namely, "May God grant us his peace." In the present time of gray, global un-peace and uncertainty, every day that little prayer seems to be strengthening in brightness. What does God's peace have going for it that the earthly sort does not?

First, God's peace is not subject to availability one day to the next: God's being, which is all love, can neither be added to nor taken away from, and the nature of human response has not the slightest effect on the love and peace that God simply is, and bestows freely.

Second, while earthly peace has a lot to do with ready access to commerce and where one's game-piece is on the geopolitical board, God's peace is no respecter of zip code, health, social or economic status; not a commodity, but God's own self.

How does one access this peace, then? Julian of Norwich understood from Jesus that "we have been known and loved by God from without beginning." There was never a time when any one of us was not seen, known, understood and loved — even better, believed-in — by God. All that is required to access the peace that God is and bestows is to recognize this fact, and take rest in it.

This Advent the brothers and sisters of the Order of Julian bid you God's peace, peace the world cannot give, that goes beyond asking or imagining.

Yours in Jesus and Julian,

M. Hilary, OJN

Guardian of the Order

The Order of Julian of Norwich is a contemplative monastic Order of monks and nuns of the Episcopal Church.

Our widespread community of Oblates and Associates, 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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Community Notes

This year after a fast, short spring, we had what felt like a long summer, before this was suddenly over with a fast, short autumn. We're on the other side of autumn color now and in the long stretch of bare and brown before serious snow comes, perhaps by the time you receive this.

In late September — the "end" of summer — we held the annual Associate and Oblate Priors' meeting here at the monastery for the leaders of our affiliate communities.

In October Mthr Hilary attended the Fond du Lac Diocesan Convention. We were able to have our long silent retreat in October, during a good quiet period after summer work and before autumn work.

There has been a great deal of groundskeeping and plant work going on this year and a lot

has been due to our friends. Patrick began with building new soap forms (which are turning out much more soap than before) then moved on to installing brighter lights in the workshop, fixing up around the house, putting new wheels on the cart, and bringing over a gas-powered splitter in early September, which he used to turn a pile of cut logs into split wood. This last means that we have enough solid winter fuel prepared for at least four years.

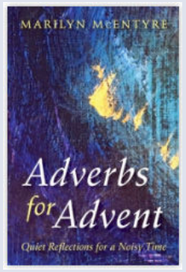
Meanwhile, we've been busy with soap, the guesthouse, and apples. It was an apple year and our small orchard produced more than five bushels of fruit, much of which we were able to harvest, sort, and set aside for preserving (and eating) during the winter. It's literally apples and cranberries from here to Christmas, when some of our friends send oranges.

The first snow came in mid-October, during our silent retreat. We were given a generous frosting of just over an inch of very sticky snow, which didn't melt for over a day. The first snow that stays is occasion for our tradition of a community hot chocolate, served by the prior.

A lot of maintenance, or practical care, happens in monasteries — physical plant, pastoral, hospitality, administration, and also institutional. In the past year, with counsel from our Bishop Visitor Wendell Gibbs as well as other religious superiors, we have been working on necessary institutional maintenance in the form of revised Constitutions and Statutes. Members of other religious orders will know the time and work involved! This process addressed administrative recommended-practices of the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas, as well as aspects of common life that have needed updating and clarifying. One we have chosen to alter is the formula of our vows, changing them from a "mendicant" form of the evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity, obedience) to the Benedictine formula (obedience, conversion of life, stability) which we discerned better suited the Order's charism and way of life. After ratifying the new Constitutions & Statutes in November, we renewed our vows under the new formula. In the Benedictine formula, both poverty and chastity are included under "conversion of life."

We have been welcoming new Oblate aspirants and Associates, some of whom have come to stay at the guesthouse, and available space next year is already being booked.

Clockwise from far left: Patrick at work on the threshhold to the foyer, which was lowered • Patrick & Mthr Hilary at work on the pile of cut logs • Sr Cornelia at work on the apple harvest



Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, ***Adverbs for Advent***
Wipf & Stock, 56 pp. 2017. ISBN 978-1-5326-4314-9

The Catholic writer Brian Doyle was once asked if he had left adverbs out of one of his novels on purpose or by accident (he didn't say). Here is a book unambiguous with its adverbs. McEntyre's "Quiet Reflections for a Noisy Time," in the words of the subtitle, introduce twenty-eight adverbs as ways to live in the liturgical season (Advent) that has become the longest, most hectic, and most commercial secular holiday. This slim book comes in at under 60 pages, and each very brief chapter — none more than a page — looks tantalizingly bite-sized, but these twenty-eight illuminations are more date-bar than truffle. Each adverb is given a gentle etymological prodding which discloses threads of poetry, memory, history, stories, and the vulnerable places that questions can be. If many of them bear witness to values often called monastic, it is simply because they are values at the heart of the gospel. McEntyre throws light on the lensic quality of these choice words, through which the reader may more clearly read the signs of the times, or the signs in one's own life. It will bear reading repeatedly.

Reaping & Sowing

Mthr Hilary OJN

In his gospel, Saint Luke is at pains to place the events of John the Baptizer's ministry into their real-time, real-world context. *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee,* and so on. John's call to repentance, renewal and the acceptance of imminent Divine Hospitality was directed toward a certain group of people living in certain circumstances in a certain place at a certain time. Luke's careful accounting has direct implications for us, as to this very day, John's prophetic voice calls out to us. Everything and everyone that constitutes our *own* peculiar circumstances are the filter through which the nearness of the kingdom of heaven is announced, and the petri dish inside which that kingdom is to be birthed.

Try this thought exercise for a moment: Close your eyes and call to mind the one thing about your present circumstances that most occupies you in a non-life-giving way, that makes you grind your teeth during the day and weep into your pillow at night. Now, it may be exactly this circumstance that is the instrument divinely allowed in your life to help accomplish the present stage of your salvation.

In *Simone Weil and the Intellect of Grace* Henry Finch writes of Weil that "She knew that what we tell ourselves about ourselves is, in one way or another, almost always pleasant, while what we find out about ourselves from outside is almost always a shock...Only what pierces the soul from without has a chance of revealing to us what we really are."

John the Baptizer has come to announce the arrival of what will do just that. "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways smooth." The words of Isaiah's prophecy which Luke quotes are a perfect description of the goal of human spiritual formation, nothing less than a major reclamation project that cannot be accomplished apart from a certain amount of suffering. Or as Julian put it,

> ...the penance that man takes upon himself was not shown to me — that is to say, it was not shown in particular — but it was shown particularly and highly and with full lovely demeanor that we shall humbly and patiently bear and suffer the penance that God Himself gives us, with remembrance of His blessed Passion.

God wants us "to wisely recognize [the] penance which [we] are in constantly, and

that [we] humbly accept it for [our] penance, and shall then truly understand that all [our] living is beneficial penance." (*Revelation of Love*, Chapter 77)

To give ourselves to this project through repentance is to come to terms with the ways in which our own sins and weaknesses co-opt and distort the reality of our circumstances, rendering them an obstacle to progress rather than a means to it.

One time Jesus told a parable about someone being dragged into court. "Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on your way to court, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny." When a person allows him or herself to be imprisoned by their response to circumstance instead of being made wise by it, that last penny may be a long time in the paying.

The season of Advent encourages us to a circumspect and sober judgment of both our interior state and our present external circumstance and to understand what the one may be saying to the other. What exactly are we resisting — or perhaps growing? What high places must come down, what low places built up? The bidding in the collect for Second Advent to "heed [the prophetic] warnings and forsake our sins" is a precondition for greeting with joy the coming of Jesus Christ, who is the way given us by which we "may walk safely in the glory of God."

Growth is an enterprise that takes its own time, a process that cannot be rushed. Imagine that you are a garden, patiently enduring successive episodes of water, sun, heat, darkness, compost and cultivation. The rock-hard little round things called seeds do not look very promising in the packet, but if they are planted and tended properly they will grow into something beautiful that will feed others and even produce more offspring. The Divine Gardener applies what is necessary for the healthy growth of the plant, whether it seems good to the plant at the time or not. Julian's affirming that "All shall be well" is to be understood as coming true through this time-and-again cooperative process of hearing, repenting, sorting through the gift of difficult circumstances as conveyors of wisdom and insight, and mutual rejoicing at incremental growth. While this process can never be said to be quite finished, we are invited today to rejoice and be grateful for whatever is our present state of arrival.

We are assured that in all this, the fulfillment of our hope is certain, even in the dark of Advent. We who "have gone out weeping, carrying the seed, will come again with joy shouldering our sheaves."