A Note from the Prioress

"Better Together" has been employed as a national campaign slogan, an encouragement to buy more on e-commerce sites, even in at least one case as a marriage proposal. For all that its use enjoys mixed success (happily successful in the case of the proposal) it has a solid basis in truth. However solitary any creature may seem, every creature under heaven needs every other for everything from basic survival to flourishing. The impulse for connection, for solidarity, the intelligence that we are necessary to one another is built into the fabric of our being; without exception all our earthly communities and collectivities advert to this.

Jesus makes this clear to his disciples especially when, raised from death, he greets them and bids them peace. This peace is not an undefined wish for good feelings, good things, but is the Person of Jesus himself, the one into whom all creation is inexorably being gathered, the compassionate one who has made us and reclaimed us for himself.

This Eastertide, may the God of Peace draw you surely to himself as we await the promised Holy Spirit, the One who binds us into one communion and fellowship.

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

Electronic Address Service Requested

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Community Notes

We were getting ready for spring in March, but this being Wisconsin, winter returned for an extended stay: the periodic snow became five more weeks of chilliness and some rain.

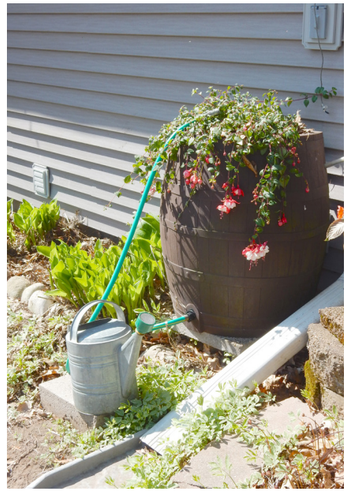
The last hurrah was a significant ice storm at the end of March. Within the next few weeks, we had thunderstorms, a night-long tornado warning, and dry heat with several days of fire weather. Spring arrived at its usual time in early May and we are still enjoying daffodils as we write.

The ice storm brought down some very large branches from the great white pine out front, so we and our neighbor have been cutting wood and collecting branches and needles. Our neighbor has also been busy clearing our trails in the woods.

Apart from the downed branches, we've been busy with lots of other groundskeeping,

addressing erosion and drainage issues, cleaning out gardens overtaken by grass, and seeding the new bare spots from digging last fall. The groundhog, who lives under the garage, is a dandelion-mowing machine but also likes soft feathery greens like newly-planted harebell.

More abstractly, we have been readying a "freshened" website with updated code, and hope it have it up by the end of the month. Some of you who have placed shop orders recently have noticed that we no longer accept credit card payments. This will require that customers remember to send payment once an order is placed.



We had our annual celebration of Julian's Day here at the monastery with festitivites and a very small "forum" discussing some themes from *Revelations*. Our reflections from that are summarized in the article in this issue.

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

Clockwise from lower left: Repairing a garden that had overgrown • A full moon setting in May • Hepatica • The west door of Norwich Cathedral in 2002 showing the then-new statue of Julian • Sources of delight

From the Refectory 2024-2025

Passions of the Soul	Rowan Williams
The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, & Religious Language	Janet Martin Soskice
A Future We Can Love	Susan Wu
God With Us	Rowan Williams
Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer	David Steindl-Rast
The Evolution of Desire: A Life of René Girard	Elizabeth Haven

A discipline of healing

In the 13th revelation, Julian was reminded of her longing for God and saw that the only thing that prevented her—or any of us—was sin. She recalled how much she had grieved over this in the past, and it was at this point that Jesus told her "Sin is behovely, but all shall be well…"

Julian was shown sin "openly" in the suffering of Christ, but she was also shown a way to regard it safely. Since in this world we are always in this behovely condition, her instructions about sin need some attention.

A small fraction of the Revelations are Julian's own pastoral counsels, and a good portion of these relate to compassion. Julian speaks about compassion numerous times in the Showings, particularly in three major instances:

- as one of the gifts or "wounds" she requested
- as a medicine necessary for our healing, particularly in regard to the true beholding of sin
- as a "revelation of compassion" of Christ's compassion in us (Chapter 28)

Her first understanding about compassion is this: compassion is not something we have to work up, we get our compassion from Christ (chapters 28, 80). In monastic terms, the work of contrition and compassion, as Julian describes it, is part of the journey to self-knowledge, to purity of heart. Purity of heart is the condition of being able to reflect God as God is, not as we imagine God to be. The three medicines Julian stipulates that are needed for our healing (our salvation) are contrition, compassion, and true longing for God. These are means of seeing and recognizing our own sin in a way that is healing. These means are part of the process of coming to self-knowledge/purity of heart.

Another understanding she reaches is that compassion is what is natural to us, natural to our human nature. It is Christ, the most-human one, who is true compassion in us. Sin is what is unnatural, and lack of compassion is unnatural. To get another picture of what the three medicines for healing are like, we can consider three "toxins" that make us impure, unready, and unworthy for God, and which the three medicines address: self-righteousness, indifference or contempt, and isolating self-complacency. The modern definition of "smug" also encompasses all three.

Many years ago, when our Sr Scholastica Marie was dying, she struggled with forgiveness. For herself, she connected this with compassion as, finally, she told us, "Compassion is having total love for someone else!" Even without bringing forgiveness into it, we cannot get to that "total love" that is becoming a complete conduit for Christ, without coming face to face with our own limitations of love, our own self-deceptions about our love.

How, though, can we arrive at that if the sin we see, whether in ourselves or in others, angers us because we have been harmed by someone or see others being harmed? In other words, how can we arrive at recognizing our own self-deceptions if we are unable to look on sin as God does—specifically without being harmed by seeing it?

Julian understood in the "showing of compassion" (chapter 28) something she did not spell out until chapter 76:

> The soul that wishes to be in repose should—whenever other people's sins comes to mind—flee that like the pains of hell, seeking remedy and help from God against it; for to consider other people's sins makes, as it were, a thick mist before the eyes of the soul, and during that time we cannot see the beauty of God unless we regard those sins with contrition, along with the sinners, with compassion on them, and with a holy longing for God on their behalf; for without this, a soul that contemplates sin and sinners is troubled, and disturbed, and hindered…

To regard sin and sinners without recourse to the three medicines is to make ourselves "blind" to God and God's works and thus "troubled, and disturbed, and hindered." Julian's point is that while we imagine we may be able to see what is going on with sin, if we do not practice contrition, compassion, and true longing for God as part of this process, we will only be harming ourselves; we will be troubled, disturbed, and hindered precisely because we will be seeing things through the filter of our own sinfulness, and so risking falling into sin ourselves. Our response to the sin or downfall of others makes us either more human (like Christ) or less human (unlike Christ). "He acts toward us as he teaches us to do, for he wants us to be like him in completeness of unending love toward ourselves and our fellow Christians." (chapter 40)

To flee the thought of others' sins "like the pains of hell, seeking remedy and help from God against it," is a counsel to discipline one's mind and heart and not begin to think we have no need to do so. What we choose to pay attention to is so important that it is at the root of Julian's exhortation about sin—she names inattentively wasting time as the beginning of sin.

To prevent what we think is compassion for others in their sin from sliding into condescension or worse, self-righteousness that imagines it is being compassionate, it is helpful to remember that "compassion" means "to suffer with," not "to suffer *from*." It flows from a sense of belonging to others and being willing to suffer with them whatever they are suffering. To get to this point, our own contrition is still necessary. Julian wrote that sin "purges us and makes us know ourselves and ask for mercy, for the Passion of our Lord is a comfort to us against all this, and that is his blessed will" (chapter 27).

Trappistine Cristiana Piccardo put it like this:

> 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. (Emphasis added)

In other words, to experience our need of God's mercy is not only what makes a contemplative life possible, it is what makes being able to offer compassion possible, seeing our own frailty and being able to become "a space charged with God's living presence, a manifestation of saving Mercy."