A Note from the Prioress

From the light of Epiphany we are being sent out with Jesus into the desert of Lent. He is reliving his people's long wandering there, we are reliving his. What is it we find there? Sun, moon, stars, lots of rocks and sand and time. These are ingredients enough to scrub the desert sojourner of his or her pre-pilgrimage preoccupations, for the brain's concerns to come as close to the body's as possible: Am I about to be eaten by something? And what shall I myself eat? If nothing else, the desert is an exercise in extreme integration.

Once the pilgrim takes on board that there will be a future beyond the desert, the landscape can begin to do its holy work. Jesus wrestled with the same temptations his people did so many years before; we do the same. Jesus's life, Jesus's way is the model by which we measure our own. Whatever may be going on elsewhere of the virtues or the vices of others, our focus in this Lenten desert is Jesus, and his life working within us both to will and to work for his good pleasure. May the desert of Lent bring you safely to the joy of Easter and Jesus's undying 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.

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

Volume XVII • March 2025— • No. 1

the newsletter of the Order of Julian of Norwich

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Community Notes

The big news of the winter was that the solar battery back-up, long-planned and anticipated, was installed at last.

After our neighbor happily carted off the gas generator last fall, November and December were busy with the solar techs and electricians putting up the battery shed, rewiring many things, and finally installing the solar battery.

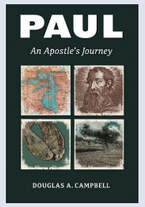
An important part of this process was the electric utility. The project involved decommissioning one of our two electric meters so that we would only have to run on one meter. There was a small hiccup when the utility not only remotely decommissioned one meter, but left the other one open, so that we had no power (and consequently no water) when the solar technicians turned everything back on.

Fortunately, the utility was contacted before too long, remotely closed the meter, and the ground techs arrived once again. Now the guesthouse is on the load from the main service, so everything will be backed-up in the event of power outage. In addition, we are now able to export power to the grid, and because of the way solar power works, our neighborhood is the immediate benefactor.

This is the completion of a project we dreamed of years ago when still living in Waukesha—and we owe it to your great generosity.

The winter has been a little snowier and much colder than last winter, to our great relief. Like last year, New Year's day was sunny with no snow, but from the middle of January there was enough to cover the ground for a few weeks from the time it got extremely cold. The chapel photo on the back shows the sunlight at winter solstice. The vernal equinox is now right around the corner. Meanwhile, you remain in our prayer through Lent and always.

Clockwise from lower left: Repairs in the liturgical closet • Fine tech work in the battery shed • Another trench for the combined electric line • Going to sweep the panels after a snow



Paul, An Apostle's Journey • Douglas Campbell • Eerdmans • pp 219 •
ISBN: 978-0-8028-7347-7

Noted Pauline scholar Douglas Campbell traces Paul's physical journeys throughout the first-century world and his spiritual journey, from Jewish "death squad leader" to Jewish apologist for Jesus the Messiah. It is not so much a travelogue as a means to explore the sometimes Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr. Hyde-y feel that some of Paul's letters can have, written to the churches he and his colleagues established in Asia Minor from 31-52 CE. Now gracious and expansive, now harsh and even damning, the sudden turns in Paul's writings have confused interpreters for centuries. Which one is the Gospel that Paul proclaimed, ultimately at the cost of his life?

Paul's Gospel, revealed to him by Jesus on the road to Damascus, offering new life to pagan converts and a wholly-reoriented ethos of Torah-observance to Jewish believers, is in a literal foot-race with "another gospel" from certain Jewish Christian teachers coming from Jerusalem. They say the new pagan converts must observe the whole law of Moses in order to be saved. As presented by Campbell, the sudden and shocking shifts in Paul's letters turn out to be an educational strategy. Paul embeds sample arguments into his letters, tutorial "dialogues" between himself and these Jewish missionaries, to teach the new churches how to recognize the difference between their harsh, false gospel and the true Gospel that they had already received. Paul's Jesus is consistently the faithful one, the revelatory irruption into the world of unlooked-for grace.

Readers who know Julian will recognize in Paul's Gospel the same Jesus who made himself known to her: God, come in person to hapless humanity to deal with sin, victorious in defeat and death, and who, Campbell is bold to say, wins all in the end.

Praying attention

Mthr Hilary OJN

Await, Allow, Accept, Attend. I don't know where this unofficial motto of the Order of Julian came from or to whom to ascribe its invention, but since its appearance early in the Order's life it has taken root and thrived. Now and again current events call out for another visit to this volunteer planting to see what new fruit it may have to offer.

Long ago in schoolbus-driver's training class I was taught that when coming up to a railroad crossing the driver was to "stop, look, and listen" for possible approaching trains, even to swing open the door for the clearest view. This went double if the crossing was not equipped with articulated barriers, bells, or flashing red lights. Whatever the hypothetical given—darkness, rain, fog, snow, or simply the bus full of fifth-graders itself, a steady application of scary driver's-ed films got the message across: not paying due attention at crossings could have terrible consequences.

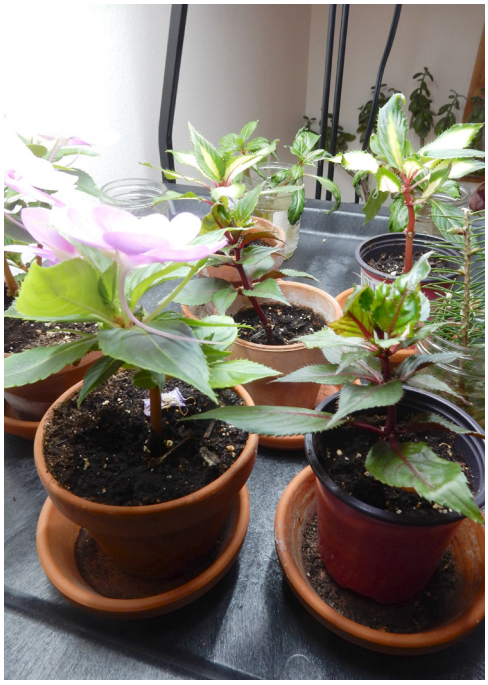
In the revelations given to Julian, Jesus from the crucifix prompts Julian on occasion to do just this, to stop, to look, to listen carefully, that is, to await, allow, accept, and attend. When Julian first begins to see the vision of Jesus's head bleeding from the crown of thorns, she tells us that Jesus courteously waited while she gazed intently—that "the bleeding [of his head] continued until many things were seen and understood." Another time, Jesus actually pauses the showings he is making to Julian, perceiving that, while she is anxious for the showings to proceed, she has not yet grasped well enough the one she's presently in the middle of. Jesus tells Julian, in effect, "My dear, pay attention to this, for until you see and understand this point I am making, I cannot show you all the rest."

The very nature of the visions demanded this awaiting, allowing, accepting, attending. The showings arrived one by one, sequentially, one revelation building upon the last. Julian's reception of what she was seeing required close attention, too, for parts of an earlier revelation might anytime loop around again to illumine, interpret and comment on a later one. It was not until decades after the event of these sixteen visions that Julian had anything like a comprehensive grasp on the totality of Jesus's meaning that we see in her finished book. Until then, parts of the revelation remained at least somewhat opaque. This was a mercy for Julian. Had she have been given everything all at once she would have been undone.

Julian surely knew, as many of us have, the mental fog, the stubborn opacity of understanding that comes with learning difficult concepts. But Julian came to learn that there is another opacity, the spiritual and moral one brought on by humanity's inheritance of sin. Sin is a blindness, Julian said, a pervasive miasma that prevents us having an accurate vision of God, of our own state of need and beatitude, or an accurate estimation of others. Sin is that persistent deadly fog hanging about the unmarked railroad crossings that Jesus has come to dissolve, as he tells his people using the words of the prophet Isaiah. He is "to open the eyes of the blind, to let the oppressed go free." Each Christian's vision is slowly being healed—cleared—by continual practice at seeing, hearing, understanding and following Jesus. In his light, we see light. Discipleship is an ongoing, active process of stopping, looking, listening, awaiting, allowing, accepting, attending.

In the Gospels Jesus does not use identical methods in his encounters with people he meets but trims his response to each one's need, and he does the same for us. It should be no surprise, then, as we are apprenticing to Jesus, that the assignments he gives to participate in world-mending will also differ according to the makeup, strengths and abilities of each. This apprentice gets a quite active assignment, that other one something else. Had Julian left her attentive silence and her pen to respond to Jesus in exactly the same way as did her compatriot, the loquacious and peripatetic Margery Kempe, it is quite unlikely that you and I would now be meeting over the words on this page.

We cannot see clearly what sort of train is coming around the bend of world affairs, let alone what might be on it. But we do know what will actively help and not simply add to the noise and confusion. Given the cascading and acute needs of the world the first thing for apprentices to do as they discern what action to take is to stop, to look, to listen intently to Jesus, to *await, allow, accept, and attend.*



Growing pains

Sr Therese OJN

In Mark's gospel, an incident with the apostles on the road in chapter 8 (vs 27-38) becomes a teaching moment of particular depth. It is one of those moments that can happen to the disciples over and over, and it is never a comfortable one. Because here they are confronted with the fact that they have stopped listening to Jesus—they have in fact stopped following him, and are instead following their own ideas, or their unacknowledged needs, or what their culture of origin said was the right thing.

Jesus's sharp words to Peter are aimed at what underlies this: the fear that refuses to be vulnerable, that claims all necessary change is only an exterior matter, or a matter that only other people are required to deal with. This is the fear that is fixed on any solution offered by "human beings"—power by force or violence or the threat of violence, a solution which includes the evasion of humility, of truthfulness, of accountability.

The hope that Jesus is proclaiming is another kind entirely, which involves relinquishing the old ways of thinking and acting. What will it profit his disciples if in the pursuit of what they believe is the best thing for God's kingdom, they forfeit their lives to anxiety, or forfeit compassion to trampling on others their culture says are expendable, or forfeit their faith to justifying themselves? Because the proof of whether they have denied themselves or not will not be in how self-satisfied or comfortable they are, but of how much they have grown in love.

The call to take up the cross and follow Jesus is in truth a call to become wholly human, to grow out of reactions, defenses, blame. The call to deny themselves is a call to utter fearlessness and trust, and for this they must live with Jesus.