A Note from the Prioress

Fear…not!

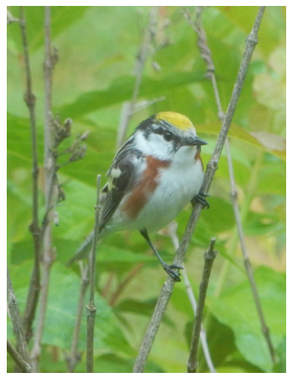
Along with fear of bodily infirmity and death itself, the next big fears have also always been with us—of natural disaster, famine, fire, flood, poverty, war, societal instability. As increasingly imaginable events, these higher-magnitude fears are making inroads among those whose geographic, economic and social locations have, until now, been sufficient insulation against any of these things actually happening. When we are unaccustomed to such fearful thoughts we begin to understand our creatureliness in new and uncomfortable ways. Yet this is not a bad development. Fear can shock suddenly awake, can grace-fully send a person into paths of compassion, solidarity, active love and service. Praying the comprehensive Great Litany from the Book of Common Prayer, for instance, is a ready-to-hand response that leaves one not more fearful, but with a sense of renewed trust and steadfast intention.

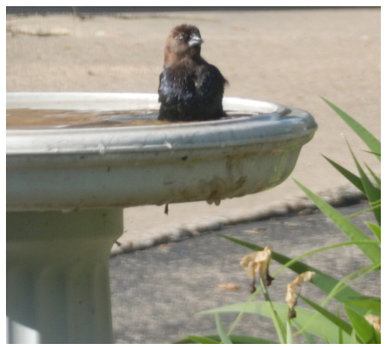
That events conspire to allow us to feel our creatureliness as never before is not tragedy, but invitation to become more like Jesus. To his last breath Jesus lived our creatureliness, our humanity, thoroughly, steadfastly, trustingly, and lives that humanity now joyfully and undying in heaven where we trust to come. We thank you for reading this issue of Julian's Window, and we remember you in our prayers, giving thanks for your prayers for us and for your friendship and support.

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

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Community Notes

Julianfest and the retreat in Oconomowoc this year centered on creativity in various ways. We welcomed Marilyn McEntyre as the retreat speaker, discussing fear and creative responses to it. At Julianfest we discussed creativity and prayer.

Our weather this summer is gratefully more rainy than in the past two years. There has been enough rain for local farmers as well as to keep the Northwoods free from fire threat. An especially lively storm produced some lightning in the immediate vicinity which toasted our phone. The need to have the phone line repaired has become a traditional summertime issue.

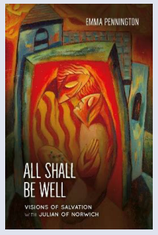
Because of the rain this summer, cutting the field for hay has been delayed. We have had a few days at the barn to keep the barnyard trim.

In July we welcomed a group from St Augustine's Rhinelander for a day visit and talk by Mthr Hilary. At the end of the month we welcomed the deanery of the northeast region of the diocese for their quarterly meeting.

It has also been a wildlife intensive summer, with many animals now showing up regularly. We were also visited by a bear, a bear cub (without its mother), and a bobcat.

We have been asked about bird life around here; we see more varieties than we can take photos. During a particularly hot and muggy spell the birdbath did constant business, including (back cover) a thrush, chipping sparrow, bluebird, and cowbird. A visiting scarlet tanager in May cleverly eluded the camera for several minutes before we gave up. We were more successful with a pair of chestnut-sided warblers (back cover).

Clockwise from lower left: The group from St Augustine's Rhinelander • Camera-shy visiting bear cub • One of the creativity & prayer events at Julianfest • Barn clean-up day • Mom-n-pup groundhogs • A visit from the bobcat



All Shall Be Well: Visions of Salvation with Julian of Norwich • Emma Pennington • BRF • pp 159 • ISBN: 978-1-8003-9206-9

Following her first book on Julian's Revelations, *At the Foot of the Cross with Julian of Norwich*, which dealt with Revelations 1-8, Pennington's new book looks at Revelations 10-16. As before, Pennington's concern is to present Julian and her cultural and religious world for a readership unfamiliar with the Catholic context of Julian's visions and text, particularly by stressing the biblical basis of Julian's faith and writings. Her focus remains "to contemplate salvation and our own personal relationship with Christ… made accessible through his suffering on the cross."

The first part of the book looks at Julian in the context of her time and in Norwich; the second part explores Revelations 10-16. However, these two parts are not hard and fast, for Pennington's brief explorations of each vision also connect her summaries of these visions with some contemporary imagery it reflects, devotional literature, biblical quotations and references, contextual details of the revelations, the devotional culture of late 14th century England, how sin was dealt with in that context, the life of prayer at that time, and Julian's text as witnessing to the concerns that were probably brought to her window. Each chapter of the second part concludes with a guided reading exercise, questions for personal devotion or discussion, and a verse of scripture. Pennington brings out how, like a theologian, "Julian's revelation does not so much alter the teachings of 'holy church' as bring a deeper understanding and spiritual awareness that they already contained…" renewing our vision of salvation "from the perspective of God's love and goodness."

Thoughts on windows

Dcn Laura Norby ObJN

Sometimes I imagine myself at Julian's bedside as I ponder her visions. The magnitude of her conversion experience and her surrender to Jesus with her whole being amaze me. I have envied the rich relationship Jesus invited her into, as the revelations were intimately and lovingly shown to her. They have spoken to my heart for decades. Recently, in a not-so-rare moment of anxiety about the life I observe in this time and culture, I asked Jesus and Julian if they had a word to give me in this fraught moment. I asked Julian, How did you live through those long years after the visions?

I do absolutely rejoice in the 'shewing' of God's unending love and delight in us, the knowledge that this joy in Christ is our birthright. I believe absolutely that God has made us, loves us, and keeps us for eternity. Still, I just sat and listened. An image came to me as I reflected on life in her three-windowed cell.

Becoming an anchoress in a cell meant Julian engaged with the world in a new way of being. She was literally walled into a supremely intentional life with three windows to sustain her; one to her sacramental life in Christ with Holy Church, one to the maintenance of her physical necessities, and one opening to the lane, where she lived out her response to Jesus by sharing with those who came seeking wisdom.

What I had not seen, except in a cursory way, was how the three windows were equally vital and interconnected. An image formed by the three suggested the perichoretic relationship between them. Each nourished, and was nourished by, the others in a familiar, dynamic, water wheel motion. I have never noticed this obviously trinitarian image, but I did recall how often a soul-deep experience of Jesus will prompt and fuel a desire to share what happened with others, and to serve God by the sharing. In this, I saw the third window anew.

Julian took the message of God's absolute delight in us and gave it to her 'even Christens' who came for counsel. She must have communicated her firsthand understanding of the resurrection reality that we do not die. She helped others see that God held them tenderly, embracing their fears and feelings, even as we hold wonder and beauty right alongside the frightening realities of our current day. God poured through Julian to her companions living in the weal and woe of life. Love, truth, wisdom; she was anchored in these. Holy Church gave people Original Sin. Julian helped them see Original Goodness. I have no doubt that she gave freely what she had been given, as she learned she had been given the showings for the sake of others.

Gradually some familiar touchstones took shape for me as I reflected on her integrated life, the humble, ongoing, emptying and refilling motion of her sacramental, spiritual, and physical life through the long years after the visions. I was brought back to my spiritual refuge, the space I return to in moments when my own dis-integration threatens to throw me off balance. What I need in such a moment is one real moment with Presence, where wholeness dwells. There I see God's invitation to:

Remember we are loved and delighted in by our Creator.

Remember all creation, down to the last atom and beyond, is, in Julian's words, made, loved, and kept full securely by God.

Remember to stay engaged with life and other people.

Let resurrection reality pour through us, so that we may hold others' experiences as tenderly and compassionately as God does.

Trust that God is making all things new. Though we do not know how or when, we do know why. Julian sought an answer, and it was given to her. Love was his meaning.

Anchors enough for me.

The Apostle to the Apostles

Mthr Hilary OJN

Today is a comment not so much on the familiar events of today's Gospel, but on the things that make up apprehension, and how Mary of Magdala, the tower of faithful consequence, Mary the one who stayed, is often apprehended.

The collect for the feast first reminds the Church of St Mary's former condition, depicts her as "a" witness of the Resurrection, then quickly returns to parse Mary's spot in the firmament as an advocative example for the infirm, hope for the wounded.

St Mary Magdalene was not merely "a" witness of the Resurrection, but the first witness sent by Jesus to the rest of the apostles and disciples, women and men. St Mary was and is, for all time, apostolic ground-zero, the first-but-none to see, to understand, to believe and to tell. This is quite clear in the Gospel account.

Oddly enough, this is one way we know the Gospel account is true, by how much trouble it has subsequently given the Church, and how evidently dangerous this account causes St Mary to be. We can see this by how the Church commonly forgets the most important information this Gospel passage gives us about her.

St Mary of Magdala is so dangerous, in fact, that her primary identity in the Western Church ever since has not been Mary the persevering; Mary, the Witness of Consequence; Mary, Apostle Number One; but Mary, the formerly-damaged person. If the collect is any indication, she is known amongst the saints primarily as the beacon of hope of all who aspire to become formerly-damaged persons.

So, what is it that needs to keep people bound to a certain definition, like a ball and chain, or a qualifying asterisk in a sporting records book? It's fear, of course, and in St Mary's case, first, the fear of strong women whose powerful being and bearing might throw shade on the actions and attitudes of male colleagues. Then again in Mary's case, it's the fear that whatever scary infirmity beset her in Time Before might suddenly break out again and cause who-knows-what kind of havoc.

It's fear that contains a good bit of wary mistrust, and it's all down to habits of pre-Resurrection zero-sum thinking. And this holds, of course, even on Mary's part: despite the earlier witness of Lazarus, if we have seen Jesus die, he must for ever be dead. If Jesus is not here, someone must have stolen his body. There is no room in the pre-resurrected mind for something completely other, something that breaks every one of these either/or categories.

The definitional grave-bindings imposed upon others that arise from fear are a direct refusal to inhabit the Resurrection that St Mary first apprehended and first proclaimed. Something wholly new and unimaginable has happened, and its implications for our familiar state of sinful woundedness too devastating. But if we are to be people entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, we've got to let go of the side of that pool. Reconciliation has to begin with us, inside us. We must first become what we've already been baptized into: people of resurrected mind. The fact of the Resurrection asks us—no, commands us—to take a leap of trust, to let go our habitual, fearful comparative zero-sum thinking, and dare the freedom of new unfettered life.