A Note from the Prioress

Recent war, pandemic, global outbursts of revolution, protest, populist- and state-incited violence—this was the backdrop to W.B. Yeats's unsettling, even disturbing, 1919 poem "The Second Coming." It begins: Turning and turning in the widening gyre / The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

Julian saw that the Church (and, by implication, the world) would be shaken "as men shake a cloth in the wind." Yeats's world was being shaken; a certain understanding of how the world should work was dying, another not yet come to birth. His poem is an apposite mirror in which is reflected the face of our own troubled times. In truth this rag-shaking is going on constantly, everywhere, more or less noticeably depending on one's state of precarity or possession of influence. As the amplitude increases, so do calls for adaptability and resilience, which humans are almost too good at. What is the cost of stability as we have known it? Who benefits from the lives of increasingly resilient but invisible others? Two other questions step from the poem's shadow: what is the conceptual center upon which the gyre of history is founded, and *should* it hold?

Jesus revealed himself to Julian from the crucifix as creating, upholding, redeeming Love—to borrow Eliot's phrase, the "still point of the turning world", that reality from which all comes and to which all is forever securely anchored. Julian also saw God "in a point," the center and sum of all that is, wherever it is. Those sixteen revelations shook Julian's conceptual world not only to change her mind, but to be stirred, "compuncted" and converted.

This is the use of all the world's shaking, to question the center to which our understanding of the world is anchored. What of that needs to come undone and we, too, stirred to conversion?

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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Electronic Address Service Requested

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Community Notes

This winter we have had snow on the ground continuously since November, which has been a good change from previous years, even though most of winter has been dry.

Last summer and fall we had ongoing issues with receiving E-mail via our website, which were not resolved until January. We are not sure that we have been able to retrieve all of the undelivered forms. Meanwhile, the original problem seems to have been fixed. If you have tried to contact us via a website form in past months and have not heard back, please consider either sending another form or writing a letter and posting it in the mail, since this is still the *most* reliable means.

Clockwise from lower left: Weekly chores • A short story: Unable to get through the snow around the truck on the driveway, the consolation prize was to photograph the electric linemen at work • A doe at sunset in mid-winter • Temperatures bottom out in January • More weekly chores

As winter guests have experienced, the chapel is not only the largest but the least-insulated room in the monastery, and on the coldest days of winter this is particularly apparent. We have been hoping to retrofit the old part of the house for a few years, and our contractor has finally found workers. It is very possible that this work may begin this spring. Because the planned work—reroofing, new windows, insulating and re-siding, and insulating the foundations—will cause a great deal of upheaval, this will affect availability for guests, even though no work will be done on the guesthouse and addition. We will keep you posted here and on the website about closures.

We keep you all in our prayer as we travel together toward Easter, and we are grateful for your prayer with us and for us.

Julian's Notebook: Taking part in our salvation

Our salvation, our fullness of life, is to become like Christ in all things, a point so important that Julian makes it in no less than six chapters out of 86. In chapter 77, she goes into this a little by depicting how we either resemble Christ or the devil by how we respond to our falling and sin, and she also underlines the remedy. In our sin and failure, the remedy is "love and humility"—acknowledging our wretchedness and going at once to our Lord; the remedy is that Christ is with us protecting us and leading us and teaching us how to become like himself.

In other words, what is *not* the remedy, *not* the solution, is anything that is not like Christ and that is opposed to peace and love: contemptuousness, violence, hostility. All those things make us resemble the devil instead. And all that is opposed to peace and love comes from our enemy (Ch 82).

This does not mean that wrongs should not be called out. It does ask us *not* to adhere to inflexible moral rules in dealing with individual situations, since what is needed is an openness—even a purity of heart—that perceives what is there versus a narrowness that decides in advance what is there.

On our part, this does boil down to love and trust, because what hinders us most is our reluctance to believe in God's goodness and to trust ourselves unreservedly to it (Ch 73). Trust doesn't appeal to our intellect, to our cleverness, or even to our egos; it appeals to our vulnerability, to our relationality, to our deepest humanity.

Blessed Relationship

Mthr Hilary OJN

On the third Sunday of Epiphany, we have a long look over history at the question of what it is to be in right relationship with God, and it opens with God's plea, "O my people, in all the mercies I have shown you, what have I done to you, how have I wearied you?"

In the universe of gods as humans have conceived of them, it is unusual that a deity would ask this question of mere human beings, reaching out to see why they will not accept advances of love. In so many stories, the solution of the lesser gods to rejection seems to be to say some equivalent of "well, forget this" and make the recalcitrant humans disappear. It's a pretty sure way to know that the lesser gods are actually inventions, reflections of human beings' own broken selves, because this is all too often what happens in real life. Yet God asks, and the import of the question, says the prophet Micah, is that God desires a real and reciprocal relationship with his creatures. How is a mortal to stand before the living God, as we are, as we know and feel ourselves to be? For a lot of history humans thought God would want what we tend to want as a representation of esteem, that is, to be given valuable stuff. But here Micah says God wants the most interior thing of all, hearts characterized by mercy and justice—to have hearts like God's own heart.

The Psalmist today asks the same question: who is a person who is right with God and can stand in the presence of God? It could be easy to summarize the answer as someone who has their moral stuff together, got everything securely under a well-disciplined thumb, with all the affairs of the heart, the mind, and the will in good order—acceptability as return for good behavior. After all, this is how most humans seem to like themselves best: in the little package of ourselves, everything is contained, accounted for, all is right with our interior world, and evidenced as such by impeccable outward actions. (Maybe this is why fictional characters like Obi-Wan-Kenobi and Master Po are so compelling; we'd love to be like them!) But the moralist-behavioralist answer would also be in error: underneath this psalm and all the psalms is the understanding that a proper and acceptable offering to God is characterized by love and freedom, a non-contractual, gratified response to what God has already done for us.

Finally, then, Jesus comes along and puts the emphatic dot at the end of the prophet's and the psalmist's understanding of which end is up. Humans have persisted in the idea that blessedness consists in having our proverbial stuff together, but Jesus begins his ministry by saying no. And more, he says, this is why I am here for you—those who are blessed are those who know themselves to be, in short, a mess, whose internal affairs are not what they "should" be, who know themselves to be poverty-stricken, deficient in justice—people who recognize and mourn their moral decrepitude, but yearn all the same to be people of justice, wisdom, and peace. These are the blessed, Jesus says, because they are empty enough, readied for a real relationship with God the source of life. The blessed are the people who realize that they are not enough in and of themselves, that without God's merciful keeping they would be swept away like a mist as if they had never been. These are the people ready to receive all that they are and need from God, and to requite that providence not with stuff, but with thankfulness and love.

There is a way in which the vigorous pursuit of a wise, moral, well-ordered life can actually be idolatry, where dealings with the Ineffable are understood as a sort of transaction, protecting a person from the scary and costly possibility of a living, bracing relationship of love with God. We should indeed seek to be wise

and well-ordered, and moral too, but not as proof of ultimate respectability, or in remittance of contractual obligation. These things are the living evidence of response, love's kinetic requital from people who know that anything they've become is what they've received from God. To that end, says St Paul, the righteous person will not be the one who always has all their stuff together, but the one who knows they are justified only by the merciful keeping of God.

Not Looking Away

The Rev Paul Richards ObJN

Julian of Norwich lived in a time of plague, social fracture, and relentless fear. She did not look away. From the stillness of her cell, she chose attention over denial, contemplation over escape, and love over despair. Her witness reminds us that faithful seeing—seeing that refuses to flinch—is itself a form of prayer.

That insight has shaped my own religious and humanitarian work, particularly during two journeys to Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion. My most recent trip, completed in January 2026, came during another winter of strikes against civilian infrastructure—electricity, heat, water—aimed at wearing down a population by cold and exhaustion. In such places, Julian's wisdom becomes concrete. The question is not whether suffering exists; it is whether we will attend to it with courage and love.

Julian wrote of beholding Christ's suffering with clear eyes, neither sentimentalizing pain nor turning away from it. "I desired to suffer with him," she said—not as a romantic impulse, but as solidarity. In Ukraine, that solidarity takes ordinary, practical forms: listening to veterans whose injuries are visible and invisible; supporting families carrying the quiet weight of loss; standing with medical workers, clergy, and volunteers who refuse to abandon their posts. These are not heroic gestures. They are acts of accompaniment.

On both trips I worked alongside local partners serving veterans and civilians—delivering medical and rehabilitation equipment, supporting trauma-informed care, and encouraging community-based recovery efforts. In January, amid air-raid warnings and sub-zero temperatures, I saw the steady, unspectacular heroism of people restoring power, keeping clinics open, and creating spaces of warmth and human connection. It was Julian's "homely love" made visible: the grace that meets us in the ordinary, even when the ordinary is harsh.

Julian insisted that love is not proven by explanations but by presence. She did not offer tidy answers to the problem of suffering. Instead, she trusted that "all shall be well" not as a denial of pain, but as a hope anchored beyond it. In Ukraine, that hope shows itself when communities gather in shelters to share food, when chaplains and social workers keep showing up, when children find room to play despite the noise of war. It is hope practiced, not proclaimed.

For members of the Order, Julian's vocation calls us to a disciplined compassion—to hold suffering steadily in prayer and action. Not looking away does not mean being consumed by despair; it means refusing indifference. It means allowing the reality of others' pain to shape our choices, our giving, our advocacy, and our intercessions.

As I returned home this January, Julian's voice stayed with me. She teaches that faithful seeing is a participation in God's own gaze—tender, truthful, and unafraid. In a world tempted to look away, her witness invites us to remain: attentive, grounded, and committed to love that does not abandon the wounded.