

THE FRIENDS OF JULIAN OF NORWICH

MAY Newsletter 2020



Message from the Chair, Sally-Anne Lomas

Dear Friends of Julian,

It is with great sadness that we cancel this year's Julian Festival as we had many good things lined up to celebrate Julian.

Professor Vincent Gillespie's Lecture, *Julian in Troubled Times*, seems so particularly apt for this challenging period the World is living through. The good news is that we intend to offer all that was planned for this year plus more exciting and stimulating events to create a full long weekend and 4 day Julian Festival in 2021.

We are thinking of and praying for all our members throughout the world as this pandemic both isolates us and prevents our coming together in person but also draws us closer in community as we find new ways of reaching out to each other, such as our new website soon to be launched.

Julian once again is an inspiration and source of comfort as we draw courage from her Vows of Stability as an anchoress. She can teach us much about the benefits of self-isolation and how we can use the time of Lock Down to get closer to God and find ways from the four walls of our home to give comfort and support to others.

My thoughts go out particularly to those who are affected by Covid 19 and to those who have lost family and friends. We do not know yet what challenges the next six months will hold but I turn to Julian's understanding of her Lord's message of comfort in Long text, Chapter 29.

'Since I have brought good out of the worst evil, I want you to know, by this, that I shall bring good out of all lesser evils, too.'

With heartfelt love,

Sally- Anne



A SPECIAL NOTE

FROM FR RICHARD STANTON, PARISH PRIEST OF ST JULIAN'S

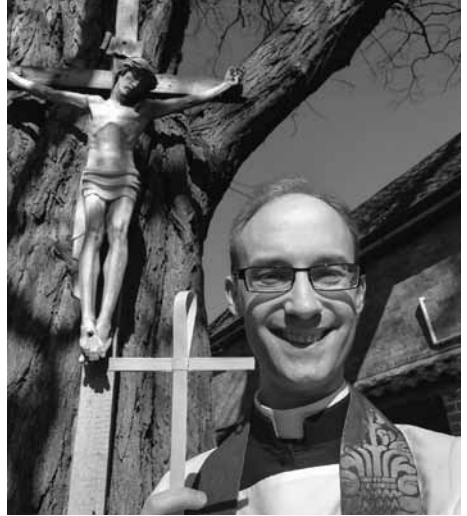
Dear Friends and Companions,

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

We're very fortunate to have the lovely Whitlingham Country Park just a few minutes' walk outside the parish, and on the afternoon of the Third Sunday of Easter I went there for my daily exercise. (How quickly we have become used to phrases like that, part of our new vocabulary along with the ghastly word 'lockdown'.)

Wildlife in and around the lake includes Egyptian geese, mute swans, wildfowl, dragonflies and butterflies (not to mention, in more ordinary times, kayakers, canoeists and paddleboarders!). As I and a few other people stood nearby, small goslings, fluffy and uncertain, tumbled about their parents' feet at the water's edge. Now and then, Father Goose (I wonder if he was Rector of an Anglo-Catholic parish in yesteryear?) flapped and hissed to warn us to keep our distance, while the mother sat calmly looking out across the lake. One gosling got to its feet, took a few steps towards her, and buried its head beneath her wing. The rest of the brood, not wanting to miss out, hastened over and did the same, clambering on top of each other to try and get as far as possible beneath her protecting wing.

This was a simple and beautiful parable in action, reminding me of those words the Church sings each night at Compline: 'Keep me as the apple of an eye: hide me under the shadow of thy wings.' As the Psalmist puts it, 'How excellent is thy mercy, O God: and the children of men shall



put their trust under the shadow of thy wings' (Ps 36.7); 'Thou hast been my helper: therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice' (Ps 63.8). Approaching his Passion, our Lord Jesus said to the crowds and his disciples, 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!' (St Matthew 23.37). Our own Julian of Norwich amplifies these maternal images when she says of the Holy Trinity, 'As truly as God is our Father, so truly is God our Mother,' and she invites us to be strengthened by the assurance that whereas 'our own mother bore us only into pain and dying, our true mother Jesus, who is all love, bears us into joy and endless living.' She goes on: 'A mother feeds her child with her milk, but our beloved mother Jesus feeds us with himself. In tender courtesy he gives us the Blessed Sacrament, the most treasured food of life.'

It is a cause of great pain to us that present restrictions make it impossible for us to gather and be nourished by this 'most treasured food of life', the Blessed Sacrament. When we turn to him in faith and hope, God does not deprive us of the graces he would normally give by sacramental means which are currently denied us, but nonetheless we pray for the swift coming of the day when the physical feeding and nurturing of God's People may begin at his altar again. I pray that these days of withdrawal and distancing may deepen our desire for the Sacraments, which we all take for granted even though they are the most divine of gifts, and strengthen our love for each other, especially our 'even-Christians'. The offering of the Eucharist, however, does not stop, and as permitted by the Bishop I have celebrated the Mass alone every day 'for the praise and glory of God's holy Name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.' You are all remembered with love at the altar of the Lord, and I hope you will unite with me in prayer as I offer the Eucharist at 10am on Friday 8th May, the Lady Julian's feast.

We planned to welcome the new Bishop of Norwich to our Festival this year; alas, this is now not to be, though we hope to release a short recorded message from the Bishop at Juliantide. Many people have drawn strength and encouragement from Julian's writings in these anxious, difficult days, and Bishop Graham is among them; in his letter to the Diocese on March 17th, he quoted her in his opening lines.

Juliantide this year marks the fortieth anniversary of the inclusion of Lady Julian in the Church of England's calendar. Some of you will have been

present for the celebrations here at St Julian's in 1980, when Bishop Maurice Wood celebrated Mass on the eve, and the following night, May 8th, the anniversary of the Showings and the first 'official' feast of the Lady Julian in the Church's calendar, my predecessor and founder of the Friends Fr Michael McLean celebrated High Mass. The same week also saw the launch of Fr Robert Llewelyn's *Enfolded in Love*, designed to bring Julian to a new and wider audience; in the intervening forty years it has sold over 120,000 copies and has just been reissued by Darton, Longman & Todd in a fifth edition. The huge success of that slim volume led to the 'Enfolded in Love series' which brought the challenge, hope and encouragement of great Christian spiritual writing within the reach of countless people.

The preacher at that Mass at St Julian's on May 8th 1980 was Bishop John Robinson, whose *Honest to God* in 1963 had startled and stimulated the Christian world. He expanded his sermon into a print version which appeared in *The Roots of a Radical* (1981), arguing that Julian's theology 'starts from the sun and not from the clouds... the shadow is deep only because the light is so bright.'

The shadow seems pretty deep in our world today, surrounded as we are by economic hardship, anxiety over employment, domestic challenges in home-schooling and childcare, deep dread about a hidden sickness spreading like 'the enemy within' and the concomitant fear of our neighbour in whom it might lurk. Small wonder that many people have turned to Julian for inspiration and encouragement, since her time was not dissimilar. She lived so close to death, self-isolated in her cell just off

King Street, in a society where life was short and brutal, close to East Anglian peasants who were tempestured by plague (the Black Death, which began when Julian was about 3 years old, claimed between 30% and 60% of the population of Europe) and harassed by bishops and barons in a social ferment which culminated in the Peasants' Revolt.

From within this world Julian desired to share the sufferings and death of Christ. As I always emphasise to groups who visit St Julian's, her conviction that 'all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well' was not an eyes-screwed-tight-shut optimism in the face of all evidence to the contrary, a piece of wishful thinking, a crutch of a lie to prop up the faltering. No: she expressed that confidence and hope because of her experience of the Passion of Christ and her share in his Paschal Mystery, which we have just celebrated in our homes this Holy Week and Easter, since 'when he was in pain, we also were in pain'.

In the Cross of Christ, the central mystery of our faith, Julian saw that

God shares all our sufferings, and that these are not punishments which he imposes from on high, but trials which he suffers alongside us. They are not necessarily taken away, but they are not meaningless. True, there is still darkness and mystery in suffering today, for we want a God who will throw out an arm from heaven to right the wrongs. A God whose 'arms of love', as W. H. Vanstone put it, 'aching, spent, the world sustain' can often feel harder to accept. On the first Friday of each month at St Julian's we usually celebrate a Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and this drives home to us again and again that the love of Christ is not an emotional blancmange into which we sink to escape the world, but a fierce and refining com-*passion* which (literally) suffers with us, since (St Paul said) love itself 'bears all things'.

Recently numerous people have found comfort and encouragement in those words of Julian's, 'All shall be well.' I am thankful for that. I commend to you, in these days of Eastertide, some other words of hers which seem to speak to us where we are now, and on which, following our experiences this year, we look forward to hearing Professor Gillespie speak at our Festival next May: 'He said not, "Thou shalt not be troubled, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be distressed"; but he said, "Thou shalt not be overcome". It is God's will that we take heed to these words, and that we be ever mighty in faithful trust in weal and woe.' As you use these days to show the compassion of Christ to other people, and to experience it yourself, may you find that this faithful trust transforms your life with new vision and fresh hope.

Devotedly yours in the Lord,

Fr Richard



COMMUNICATING WITH AUTHOR VERONICA MARY ROLF

Veronica Mary Rolf's books include:

An Explorer's Guide to Julian of Norwich (IVP Academic Press, 2018), winner of the 2018 IVP Academic Press Readers' Choice Award.

Julian's Gospel: Illuminating the Life & Revelations of Julian of Norwich (Orbis Books, 2013), First Place winner of the Catholic Press Association Book Award and the Nautilus Gold Medal for Religion.

I wanted to share with you my new podcast series entitled: *Life, Love, and Light: Reflections by Veronica Mary Rolf*.

In this series, I will be exploring the teachings of Christian mystics to discover how they may inspire, encourage, and guide us on our own spiritual path – especially during this pandemic that produces so much fear and suffering.

The Initial episode is entitled “*Sheltering in Place*” and introduces Julian of Norwich as our spiritual guide. Julian certainly has a lot to tell us about “sheltering in place” as an anchorite and surviving four cycles of the plague!

Future podcasts (one a week, at least) will enable listeners to make “*A Virtual Retreat with Julian of Norwich*.” It will be a sixteen week series – to explore Julian's sixteen *Revelations of Divine Love* and their direct relevance for our spiritual path through this crisis. Each episode will conclude with a guided meditation.

The podcasts are available for download from multiple directories: Apple iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, and a host of others. People can listen in their homes, or as they walk, meditate, or rest in nature. Here is the direct link to the *Life, Love, & Light* podcast website with all the information. Just scroll down to hear the first episode: <https://lifelovelight.buzzsprout.com/>



Above: Easter Garden at St Julian's Church, Julian's Cell and St Julian's Bell.

A REFLECTION FROM THE COMPANIONS FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Canon Gill Butterworth CJN

I have been thinking that, once again, Julian is relevant ‘for such a time as this’. (Esther 4.14) and I find Julian a great comfort. She lived through three waves of the Great Pestilence, later known as the Black Death. She would have known people who died, maybe lost some very close to her and mourned them, perhaps at a distance, unable to attend their funeral.

Julian knew, by vocation, obedience and choice what it was like to live isolated from others – the Corona pandemic has caused many of us to self-isolate. Julian may have had access to a small enclosed garden, but we don’t really know. Those of us with gardens can surely get some fresh air and see the burgeoning spring, but that is less easy for people living in apartments or high-rise flats. The solitary, limited, enclosed life has become a reality for many.

We can keep in touch via emails, texts, Facebook, What’s App, Skype, FaceTime, phone calls, post, etc. Julian had none of these, indeed her social contact was limited by her vocation as an anchoress. However, she did have limited contact with her priest, spiritual director, servants and also with the many who came to her for spiritual counsel. But she didn’t see this last group – there would probably have been a heavy curtain at her open window when she listened to them and talked to them.

Julian could attend the Daily Offices and hear Mass through her window into the church, but not be physically in the church with others. We cannot attend church but there are more opportunities to

join with others online via prayer and worship websites. Some churches will be offering their own services via social media. Julian may not have physically taken the consecrated elements at mass very often and it would have been ‘in one kind only’, the consecrated bread. Often she would have heard Mass and watched through her window and made a ‘spiritual communion’, just as many of us are learning to do.

For many Friends and Companions of Julian, the contemplative life is a reality – a response to the call of God. Whether that is solitary or within a more social setting living with others, a partner, in the family or with a friend, we know our need of God, we respond to the call to prayer and intercession. This is surely a call to all of us at this time.

Julian would have had a simple diet, and lived without most of the luxuries we take for granted, and I expect mediaeval toilet paper was non-existent! Like her, we can appreciate what we do have, live more simply and with gratitude.

Of course the Yersinia pestis virus spread differently from Covid-19/ coronavirus. We know more now about hygiene and infection control,

medical and scientific research, epidemiological mapping and the hope of the development of a vaccine. But we seem to be as susceptible to panic, fear, despair, selfishness and believing misinformation and 'fake news' as our mediaeval sisters and brothers were. The media is two-edged - a good way of disseminating helpful advice and information and also whipping up things out of proportion and worrying people. We are also seeing the best is being brought out in people in wonderful instances of love, care and self-sacrifice and community awareness. We should all follow the advice we are being given to stay as safe as we all can. But perhaps we can follow Julian by filling more time with thoughts of the love of God than being lead off-track by the media circus.



All that Julian experienced led her to write her wonderful Revelations of Divine Love, so full of insight and reflection. The God she shows us in the suffering and compassionate Jesus is the same God for us.

MEDITATIONS

From Fr. Luke Penkett, CJN ObOJN

During this difficult period

God loves us and enjoys us, and so he wills that we love him and enjoy him, and firmly trust him, and all shall be well [ch. 68]

Thank you, God, that although we are isolated we are never separated from you, that although we may not be able to come together your love lives in our hearts and we share that love through respect for others, that although we may not have all that we have enjoyed in the past we may live more simply and be more aware of the needs of others. *Amen.*

Our soul rests in God its true peace, our soul stands in God its true strength, and is deep-rooted in God for endless love [ch. 56]

God of compassion, come close to those who are suffering, enfold them in your love and assure them of your comfort; be their light in times of darkness; for the sake of your only Son who suffered alone on the cross but now reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit. One God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

He is our clothing. In his love he wraps and holds us. He enfolds us for love and will never let us go [ch. 5]

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for all in need, especially the frightened, the lonely, the grieving. During this period of uncertainty and stress, enable us to comfort the fearful, support the isolated, reassure all who are brought low, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love which knows no bounds, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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God did not say, 'You shall not be tempest-tossed, you shall not be work-weary, you shall not be discomforted,' but he did say, 'You shall not be overcome' [ch. 68] Gracious God, you give understanding and skill to all who care for the sick, and your wisdom to those now searching for a cure. Strengthen, guide, and refresh them, through your Spirit, that many will be restored to health, in Jesus' name, *Amen*.

Our lover desires that our soul should cling to him with all its might, and that we should ever hold fast to his goodness. For this above all pleases God and strengthens the soul [ch. 6] O God, help me to know that you love me and are with me, help me to trust you and feel you near, help me to believe that I am not alone and that nothing can separate me from your love, revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen*.

Afterthought ...

If you'd like a good read 'The Illuminator' by Brenda Rickman Vantrease is a medieval tale – intrigue surrounding a widowed Lady and a master illuminator. There are visits to the anchoress at St. Julian's where you'll feel present. The history of the time crackles with atmosphere and realism. Sadly not available from the Julian Centre just now, but there are other book merchants.

Felicity Maton, Trustee and Volunteer

And When Lock-down is Lifted...

...there are so many exciting possibilities for the future of the Julian Campus.' I was pondering that while the Julian Centre was closed funds were not being generated to enlarge and enliven our vision. At the time I was taking my daily exercise in the small swimming pool at the end of our garden, a rare treat in April. Swimming, for me is not just exercise; it is a praying and thinking time. Then the thought struck me that maybe my friends and some of the Friends of Julian of Norwich might sponsor my daily swims. In the past five days of glorious weather, I have swum 5km. There are days when events or weather prevents me from swimming but I reckon, if I keep up the pace, by sometime in September it is possible to swim a hundred kilometres.

Shirley's 100 km Sponsored Swim 2020

I hope some of you will agree to be sponsors. The money raised will go towards funding work needed in the Julian Centre and in the renovation of All Hallows House, St. Julian's Church and the Julian Garden, enhancing the facilities we can offer to pilgrims and visitors. If sponsorship totals £10 a km £1,000 will be raised. It would be amazing if we could reach the end of the summer knowing we have the funds to enable our visions to be fulfilled. We will let you know if the 100 km target has been completed!

Shirley Buxton CJN, Trustee and Volunteer

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