

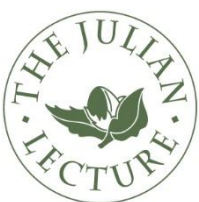
The Julian Lecture 2013

Voices from the Shrine

**Pilgrims' Powerful Encounters within the Sacred
Walls of Julian's Shrine**



Pauline Lovelock



**[1]Voices from the Shrine:
Pilgrims' Powerful encounters within the sacred walls of Julian's
Shrine**

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Pauline Lovelock has been working at the Julian Shrine since 2008. Working with children and adults, her work involves bringing people of all ages to know the Lady Julian.

Pauline has a special interest in developing children's spirituality through silence and meditation. While researching a Doctorate she has brought 6,000 children to the Shrine.

Her pioneering methods led Bishop Perrier of Lourdes to invite her to meet with him in France, for the first family Pilgrimage. Her aim is to facilitate conditions for children to have the opportunity to encounter the Divine, through music, laughter and silence. What happens next has for many been profoundly moving.

She is qualified in Medical Social Work and Education, gaining 25 years experience as a World Religions Specialist in secondary education. Pauline was awarded a Farmington Fellowship from Harris Manchester College Oxford, for work in 6th Form RE.

The lecture offers insight into pilgrims' experiences in Julian's Shrine.

[2]Introduction

I would like to begin my lecture today with the words of another Julian lecturer who stood here in 1997. A man described by Archbishop George Carey as being one of the outstanding spiritual teachers of our age,¹ Robert Llewelyn, who wrote with feeling as he said of the microphone he was given, 'Microphones put the conductor on his mettle and in my case any pearls which might have been in my head were apt to vanish before they reached my lips'.² I can only say I know what he means.

I cannot help but say how unusual it feels for me to be delivering this lecture to you today, as I am aware that for several years as your learning Project Officer, at this time, you would have found me in the porch controlling the hordes of latecomers, not actually hearing the lecture.

It was during this time I found an ally, also residing in the porch, namely Father Martin our well known Shrine Priest, recently retired. Together we would muse about what we would say if we were ever invited to deliver the prestigious Julian Lecture. We vowed if either one of us was asked, unlikely as this may seem, we would include the others deliberations.

As I stand here before you today, I would like to fulfil my obligation by revealing to you Father Martin's theory about Julian's cat, the one she is so often pictured with, fondly known to the children as JC (Julian's Cat).

He would argue, the historians were wrong; Julian in his opinion did not own a cat but in fact kept a goldfish. The goldfish was never seen because X-rays had not been invented then and it was of course in the cat. History, he maintains, has also failed to record the untimely

demise of the said cat having eaten Julian's much beloved pet. May the 'Moggie', be forgiven and rest in eternal peace.

At this point I would like to adopt a more serious and less flippant approach to this lecture.

[3]The atmosphere of the Julian Shrine

Over five years now, I have been privileged to share in the extraordinary events which take place here. I am in the unusual position of being able to speak to you from the inside of the Julian Shrine. A witness to the routines of its everyday life, as I work alongside those who minister and care for this holy place.

The Julian Shrine is a place of deep emotion and profound spirituality, experiences people have here can be life changing. It is also a private place, a place of intimacy and refuge, people come for sanctuary. Pilgrims pray here, praise God, give thanks, sometimes they laugh, they also cry.

This is not just a historical site it is the house of God. It is holy, a sacred place. The Shrine resides within the church of St. Julian's, they are important to each other. Julian's Cell would make no sense if it were not housed inside 'Mother Church'.

Pilgrims report encounters here which are warm, gentle and loving, healing takes place. However what happens here can also be uncomfortable, painful, encountering a spirituality that will shake you to your very core.

People are challenged here. I have been challenged here.

The aim of the lecture

Some of what I share today may be unexpected, even controversial, to some irritating and to others beyond belief. I pass no judgement, only present to you what has been revealed to me.

I aim to seek insight into pilgrims' reactions to Julian's message, as portrayed by them, through their own personal accounts, stories and reflections, adding some of my own. While researching this lecture I have been given accounts of pilgrims' experiences stretching back over the past 30 years.

I take for the theme of this lecture the dichotomy of 'Darkness and Light'. The Julian Shrine is a place of great light, but where there is light, there is also darkness, into which the light enters.

[4]This lecture is divided into two parts.

The first part involves the darker side of the Shrine, which can be seen as painful and uncomfortable, people come to the Julian Shrine when they are in trouble.

This will be followed by an experiential break to change the atmosphere and lighten the mood leading forward into the second part, which speaks of the great Light of the Shrine, its peace and immeasurable joy experienced here, as expressed by both children and adults.

The questions I seek to answer are simple enough: why do people travel from all over the world to come to the Julian Shrine, what is it they are seeking and what do they find here?

I have experienced phenomenal things in the church, at times the air crackles, time stands still, children will fall to their knees, this is not normal. What is happening to them? What is the release adults speak of and how is it obtained?

I suspect the answers will not be found written in any book or in lecture notes, for these experiences are written in the heart.

Ethical consideration

The Julian accounts I give are personal, those whose stories are told have given me permission to share them, although to protect their privacy, names have been altered or omitted.

It is inappropriate in this context to subject these accounts to academic rigour, triangulation and debate.

These accounts are the treasures and hidden secrets of the Julian Shrine.

They stand alone.

Respect them.

Simply, let them be.

[5]These are the personal journeys of ordinary people, as Fr. Robert Llewellyn described from his own ministry here, 'Julian needed to be made popular and brought within the grasp of ordinary people'. He said he aimed to help the non-academic person searching for deeper knowledge of God'.³ It is aspects of this journeying towards God I wish to share with you today, as I describe the journeys of both pilgrims and myself.

Personal Reflections

I feel uncomfortable sharing intimate stories of current, ongoing struggles of pilgrims in the shrine today. So please allow me to distance myself a little and share with you some personal reflections from my past.

As I meet pilgrims through the course of my work here. I often experience flashbacks as I am reminded of people I have known who made me who I am today. They were an important part of the journey which led me to Julian and helped equip me for what I would find here.

As I remember them, I think of Julian's teachings and I wonder, if I were to meet them today, what I now know, which of her words would I offer them to relieve their suffering?

I am reminded of a statement from Martin Luther King who said:

Sunday after Sunday, week after week, people come to God's church with broken hearts. They need a word of hope and the

*church has an answer - if it doesn't, it isn't a church.*⁴

Julian had answers, so let me begin.

[6] **Thalidomide**

I start my journey aged 16, as I am attempting to gain experience to be accepted onto a Social Work training course.

I have undertaken a residential placement in a home for children whose mothers have taken the drug Thalidomide. You get close to others in all their vulnerability and yours at night when you prepare for bed, taking off callipers, changing colostomy bags and speaking of loved ones, parents, brothers and sisters who never visit. Who cannot cope with the deformity, the huge need, those who have left vulnerable children and teenagers in the care of nurses because; 'They will be better off there.' But hey, perhaps mum will come tomorrow?

Whilst there I worked with a young boy aged seven, whose legs stopped at the knees. He had been told if he was "good, really good" his legs would grow. One morning he realised the truth, no matter how 'good' he was his legs would never grow. The screams that forced their way out of his tortured little body came from the depths of hell. It was a sound I have never forgotten and at times still returns to haunt me.

I tell you this because I prayed I would never hear that sound again.

I hadn't, until one day a few months after starting here, I came into St. Julian's church and found a young man, not yet thirty, standing in front of the high altar. His fist was clenched he shook with pain and rage, he was screaming Why? Why? Why? As I spoke to him, he revealed his young wife, aged twenty-four, had just died. I asked him if he wanted to speak to a priest. He declined any form of counselling, saying, "The words have not been invented that can help me now." With that he ran out and was gone. I never saw him again, but I still remember him.

What is important, is that in his pain and anguish, it was to St Julian's Church he had come. What was he seeking? What would Julian have said to him? 'All Shall Be Well?' During Shrine prayers on Friday, the priests prayed for him, 'All Shall Be Well? Was it? How could it be for either of them? How I empathise with the words of Bishop Graham, as he spoke at ^[7]the Julian Festival last year, when he said the phrase 'All Shall be Well' was the one phrase of Julian's he found most difficult, as for many it appeared to almost trivialize suffering. However, he explained it had to be seen in the light of faith, was it faith that had brought the young man to Julian? Was she able to offer him comfort and hope in such dark times?

The teachings are challenging, Julian herself grappled for years to try and fully understand their meaning.

In my early twenties I gained experience as a Social Worker in a hospital in Brighton assisting a consultant psychiatrist based in the Accident and Emergency Department.

During one night, a middle aged man was admitted having attempted to take his own life. I was sent to find out why he had

tried to kill himself and if he was likely to attempt this again on leaving hospital. The hospital as usual needed the bed.

As I approached the man, he was slumped in his wheelchair, the pattern of the rope burns had cut deep into his neck as he had tried to hang himself from the bannisters. He made no attempt to look up. The medical notes explained he had been in the wheelchair since childhood and most of his body was paralysed; he had the use of his arms. He was also deaf and unable to speak. Why did he do it? Why wouldn't he?

It also appeared he had poor eyesight. I held his hand and slowly spelt out the letters of my name in his hand with my finger. In return he spelt out his name in mine. I had him admitted and over several days, he wrote his story in my hand letter by letter. He told me, just before trying to take his own life, his eyesight, which had been steadily failing, had gone.

[8]He described himself as trapped in a broken body unable to walk, talk or hear; to lose his eyesight was to render himself into total isolation, divorced from all human contact. He was beyond despair and said his courage had failed him. The consultants had not picked up on his eye condition, it was operable, in time his sight would return. The last time I saw him, his eyes still bandaged he took hold of my hand and wrote just five words. 'Thank you. I choose life!'

There is a message from Julian which I cannot hear without thinking of him, if I had known it then, I would have spelt into his hand, no matter how long it would have taken:

He did not say, 'you shall not be tempest-tossed, you shall not be work-weary, you shall not be discomforted.' But he said,

'You shall not be overcome.' God wants us to heed these words so that we shall always be strong in trust, both in sorrow and in joy.

Forgiveness and Guilt

When I was thirty still a Social Worker, I worked under special license with the Home Office, rehabilitating prisoners, shortly to be released from serving a life sentence in Rampton High Security hospital:

I know the young man before me has committed murder, but I do not know the circumstances and I am not going to ask.

After several weeks he said he wanted me to know what he had done. While still a teenager, during a drug induced psychosis, he had seen a devil in his kitchen at home. He was afraid. He put his hands around its neck and strangled it. He felt safe. When the drugs wore off, he discovered he had killed the only person in his life who had ever really loved him, his mother. He had served his sentence, he was shortly to be a free man, but his anguish was deep, he did not want to be released. For him there would be no forgiveness. His family had disowned him, his own guilt and self-blame was overwhelming.

"My life is forfeit", he said.

[9]How helpful it would have been able to tell him about Julian's theme, that God does not blame us for our sin. In Chapter 77 she writes; 'Do not blame yourself too much, thinking that your trouble and distress is all your fault. For it is not my will that you should be

unduly sad and despondent. Further to that in Chapter 82, 'that God looks upon his servant with pity and not with blame'.

There were so many unanswered questions; what unhappiness had caused that young man to take the drugs in the first place? He needed to know that there was no wrath in God and that he had been forgiven, before he had repented, all he needed to do was reach out and accept God's love and forgiveness. I did indeed pity him and felt he had been blamed enough.

Returning to St Julian's church, some children still in primary school hold the belief they are 'bad' and not worthy of forgiveness. One little boy would not come into the church, he wanted to stay outside. When questioned he explained, "My dad says I am so evil that if I ever step foot into a church, God will strike me down, I am very bad."

On another day, a ten-year-old girl said she too was frightened in church. She has recently arrived in this country with her parents. A priest has told her she was full of sin and when she was in church she felt God was following her around, watching her every move in order to punish her, the minute she did something wrong. I spoke to the girl again four months later, "I must repent," she said, "I am a sinner." The fear had not gone.

Loneliness

A bigger issue for children I believe is loneliness.

Many write on their prayer flowers they are lonely and would like a friend. One of the ways I have addressed this is through music.

During a boys' school visit for thirteen-year-olds I played the well-known football song "You'll Never Walk Alone" a message originating from Julian. This prompted one boy to write the heartfelt prayer, 'Dear God, I am Harry, a lonely boy, please will somebody show me love?' Another child wrote, 'Please can I have a friend, could it be this week?'

[10] Julian's many references to love are important for many young people. I often teach about Julian and her sayings on love:

He loves us and enjoys us, and so he wills that we love him and firmly trust him; and all shall be well.

It is a worry some children still see themselves as unlovable.

It is at this time, I tell them my final story from the past as I return to Julian's saying 'All Shall Be Well'.

I am back in the home for the Thalidomide children. I am with a beautiful young woman.

She is also sixteen, my age. She has no arms or legs only flippers, but she loves and cares for the other children. She is like a mother to them, she protects them and they cling to her for emotional support.

One evening, as I sit with her, on the floor. 'Have you got a boyfriend?' she asks. 'Yes.' I say. 'Thought so', she replied, 'It's alright for you, who would ever look at me? No-one will ever love me, what man would want to touch me?' Tears run down her cheeks. I put my arms around her and hold her as she sobs, as if her heart would break.

I told her she radiated an inner beauty, love and kindness flowed from her. I promised her one day a man would love her for who she was and she would know she was truly loved for herself and not her looks. I told her in effect 'All Shall be well.'

I always felt guilty that I had lied to her like that, she had not deserved it. I did not really believe it either, her situation looked hopeless. Ten years later I watched a documentary about Thalidomide children. There she was with her able bodied husband and young child.

'All Shall be Well', as Bishop Graham said, "it is a matter of faith and trust that God is in control, we only have to believe."

[11] **Bereavement**

Another difficult aspect of the work we encounter on a regular basis in the Julian Cell is bereavement and loss. One school brought 200 children over a week, 42% of the children aged 11-13 wrote of bereavement. Most wrote about losing grandparents. There was also a lot of talk between the children about the fear of losing someone and coming to terms with the loss. They spoke too, of loss of parents and grandparents they no longer saw due to divorce.

One morning a group of fourteen-year-old girls came on a visit. As they were sitting in the Cell preparing to light some votive candles a girl started to cry, the two girls sitting each side of her put their arms around her. Her mother had recently died suddenly. When I spoke to her and said I was sorry to have upset her, she said, "Don't be sorry, since my mother died no one ever talks about her, I just felt she was

here, I felt I had found her again, I could feel her presence, I know that if I ever want to be near my mother again, I just need to come back here."

Adults too have reported feeling close to relatives they have lost: whilst in the church, parents from New Zealand reported feeling the presence of their dead teenage daughter, this took them by surprise, they simply repeated, over and over again, "She is in here. I can feel her, she is here."

Another girl wrote a prayer saying she missed her young friend who had died aged only eleven, saying she was too young to die, but she wanted her to know she still loved her.

What is important is that children often support each other in these circumstances, but will seek the help of an adult if they feel the need.

Sometimes it is a loss of security they feel, one nine year old boy wrote, 'I heard my dad cry last night, he cannot find work, he does not know what to do.'

[12] **Healing takes place Julian's cell**

Last year I met a couple whose story will forever be ingrained on my heart. As we sat in the cell together, they told me of the tragic death of their little girl, who a lifetime ago had developed a terminal illness which gradually led to her death while she was still a toddler, but not before her little body had closed down. It started with her ability to walk, then sit up, see and hear. She had been an only child.

The couple had a deep Christian faith and decades later still thanked God daily for the time they had spent with their child. The words of Julian had been of great comfort to them from those early days and it had been a lifelong wish for them to visit her cell. The details of their time in the cell are too personal to recount but as they told their story not a tear was shed, clearly this was a couple who had wept oceans, there were simply none left.

As they came to leave, I hugged them, what happened next was the most extraordinary and profound release of emotion followed by a powerful sense of healing and love which filled the cell. They said they had waited a lifetime to feel this way and added, if this release is what children find in the cell, no wonder they want to come back. The couple has maintained close contact with the Shrine and will always remain in our prayers.

A similar encounter experienced in the Shrine happened when a school party came for a Julian day. The group was accompanied by a teaching assistant. As the children held their candles and had a time of silence the lady became overcome and left the church in tears. Several weeks later the lady told me her 14-year-old daughter was undergoing tests for cancer. She described the atmosphere in the church as being one of great love and understanding, so deep was the sensation it had been too great for her to bear at that time, she had not been ready to let go, she simply could not trust in what she had experienced.

[13]She went on to say, however, that in the days that followed she experienced a growing sense of calm and a feeling of release which led her to be able to cope better with the unbearable trauma which she was facing. "I am glad I came to the Shrine, it is an amazing place, it helped me." she said.

The atmosphere in the Julian Shrine changes

I believe this is a place of prayer and the prayers of people who come here go into its walls and are stored there. It makes the church peaceful, calm and prayerful. It is of God. People come here to praise, but they also come when they are in trouble, to seek sanctuary. I tell them you can leave their pain and fear here, God will hear you. They come also to intercede for those who suffer.

At times then, I have been surprised to experience a feeling of great oppression in the Shrine, like a huge weight hanging over it. One Easter, I felt a deep sense of fear on entering the porch, enough to make me turn around and walk out.

I spoke of what I had experienced to priests who had spent many years in charge of another Shrine. They understood at once and explained if you believe the prayers of people are held by the walls of a sacred place, then you must also understand people come with emotional baggage which they also leave behind. It is this pain you are experiencing they confirmed, and it made perfect sense to me. They regularly blessed the Shrine to restore its strength. I am not the first person to experience this here.

Fr. Robert Llewellyn reported that as he spent time in the church over the course of some days, it seemed to empty, its strength weakening, but he also noticed by the morning the energy had usually returned.

He requested prayer support from others outside this church for the protection of the Shrine, which was on-going for many years something he valued and considered vital for its well-being.

[14] **The garden**

The garden too is sacred and has an atmosphere which changes.

Very recently a group of International Pilgrims called 'Women of Faith' visited the garden. On entering they saw a simple bunch of flowers on the ground, asking what they were for, I explained the two women who had just served them tea in the Julian Centre had earlier in the day laid their husband and father to rest there, but had returned to work, still in mourning, to care for them, visiting pilgrims.

They gasped with shock, followed by an outpouring of compassion for the remarkable courage and devotion shown by Nicole from the Julian Centre and her mother from St John's Timberhill. Two women who in their deepest grief had extended the love of Julian to them total strangers.

Some of the women wept as they stood in silence looking at the flowers. In that moment of unity, the atmosphere in the garden changed, as a deep sense of peace fell upon it. The women sensed it too and were so visibly moved by the love they had found in Julian; they changed their plans to visit the Cathedral and remained instead at St Julian's for Shrine prayers. I can only extend our deep thanks today to Nicole and her mother for showing such love to women from the other side of the world at such a difficult time.

The Mystical Heritage of Julian?

The more I experience here, the more I wonder what other mysteries Julian's Shrine holds. I have been asked by pilgrims if any miraculous

healing or phenomena have been reported to have taken place here. This is always a difficult area, normally to be avoided.

However, when I learnt Fr. Robert Llewelyn had been the Vice President of the Christian Fellowship of Psychic and Spiritual Studies for many years, I knew that he could not have held this position without having experienced extraordinary encounters himself. So it was to Fr. Robert Llewellyn's own autobiography, *Memories and Reflections*, I turned and came across this account:

[15]He writes that he received a remarkable sign. Fr. Robert was contemplating retiring from his chaplaincy role at the Julian Cell but was unable to come to a decision. So although he says he was not easily given to asking for signs, on some occasions he felt we may ask for them, this was one of those times. He had a lump on the back of his neck about one centimetre in diameter, which had been with him for fifteen years. He recalled stopping in the street and saying, "Lord, if you make this lump go down, I shall take it as a sign that I should continue my work at the Julian Cell." Within a few days it disappeared, no trace of it remained.⁶

He comments that this sort of story is irritating to some, but he saw it as witness that things do happen to the body in answer to prayer, which are outside the working of nature as we understand it. He writes 'I have no explanation for it.' He accepted this as a sign and continued his work in the Cell.

He speaks too of 'Jesus letters' written for him by Mary Crist, a locutionist, endowed with the spiritual gift of prophecy. He stayed with her while visiting the Order of Julian in America. He believed she acted as a channel for the Lord who dictated messages for her to pass on to him. The content of these letters he said he was not at

liberty to reveal as they were too personal, but suffice to say they were always gracious, encouraging and usually demanding.⁷

The healing and 'Jesus letters' were not the only events which left Fr. Robert without explanation.

Picture him on a coach, travelling to Lourdes, a loud and violent video was being shown on the TV screen. He was alarmed it would continue for a further fourteen hours. He recalls thinking 'If martyrdom could be a preparation for heaven, then this unholy din could, if endured patiently, be a preparation for holy things ahead.' Suddenly out of the loudspeaker came the words 'Julian of Norwich, Julian of Norwich', words spoken loud and clear in a pleasant voice and repeated at least six times. On enquiry no-one else had heard anything. Ten minutes later the voice returned repeating the same words as before only three times on the second occasion. Once back in ^[16]England, Fr. Robert consulted a priest about his experience who described this as 'A voice from the Lord to give encouragement and hope.' Fr. Robert could not explain the voice but records it had helped. On his return journey Fr. Robert decided to abandon thoughts of martyrdom and opted for ear plugs instead.

Others hearing voices

Others have also reported hearing voices associated with Julian and her cell. Ten years ago, a devout Christian lady, still very much associated with the Shrine today, while praying in the cell, believes she clearly heard the words 'Love yourself' a phrase she related to Julian's teachings.

A speaker delivering a talk to a church group about Julian reported hearing a male voice repeating a Julian phrase three times. During this, time appeared to stand still. The speaker was unfamiliar with the phrase and was surprised to later find it written in *Revelations of Divine Love*, but not in the notes of the talk. These were words, which were described as profoundly moving and life changing for one lady who was listening to the talk; she said they helped heal a painful incident which she still held deep in her heart from many years earlier.

Light Phenomenon

There have been two recent reports of both bright white light and coloured light coming out of Julian's cell, by people sensitive too light phenomena. This is taken to be a good sign.

Ghostly sightings around Julian

Every historic site, albeit this is modern reconstruction, should be able to claim a resident ghost. Several sightings of the Julian ghost were reported to me as having been seen before my time. Interestingly, all the reports were the same, although witnessed independently by different people over a number of years.

[17]A hooded figure looking like a medieval monk was seen standing by the votive candle stand in the church, appearing to be about to light a candle. The figure was seen on the television intercom in the

Julian Centre several times, but no matter how fast people made it to the church to check the figure out, it was always gone.

There have been two more similar, but separate incidents in the last six months, in which a modern hooded figure, without a face, was seen leaving the garden.

The garden has often been the focus of unusual sightings: over ten years ago a Magdalene woman from King Street reported to Sister Pamela she had seen three large angels in the garden protecting the Shrine. Several years later she could still explain in detail what she had seen and was adamant Sister should believe her story, which had not altered in ten years.

I can offer no definitive explanation to the possibility of these mysteries, except to say this is a sacred place, Julian reflected upon her revelations here, if mystical events do take place, then where should these happen if not at Julian's Shrine?

I would like to move on to talk about the light of the Shrine and the great power that can be felt here, a power many would attribute to the Lady Julian, but I would attribute to movement of the Holy Spirit.

Was Julian like the Tweeting Nun?

When I think of Julian, I think of the image on the front cover- Julian in front of the light. I have a friend who I imagine is just like her, young, vibrant, holy. She also committed her life to God in her 30s when she gave up everything to join a convent. She is dynamic and wishes to tell the world where to find God. She has become known

as the 'Tweeting Nun' you can follow her on twitter as she daily posts comments about the news, slanting it always to what Jesus would have said, from international disaster, to how Norwich City football team fared at the weekend.

[18]This is my image of Julian and it is the one I portray to young people as I play them modern love songs and ask them to imagine it is Christ singing to them.

Experiential

In particular I emphasise how they are loved, how Christ builds them up so they can stand on mountains, gives them freedom, so they fly like eagles. Then in contrast I offer them candlelight, silence and peace. I ask them to not just hear the silence but to feel it too. I see my job as being that of facilitator. In effect I try to set the conditions for children to have the opportunity to encounter the Divine. What does or does not happen next is none of my business, it is personal and beyond my control.

Can you plan for Spirituality?

I asked Mary Myatt, an adviser in children's spirituality, if spirituality could be planned. She said, "If we are going to have integrity in honouring the spiritual element of the curriculum and of the child, then our spiritual contribution to that is to be prepared to be surprised."

She was right. What I have witnessed alongside Fr. David Stevenson and others working with me has filled me with surprise. Working with Fr. David was an exceptional time for me. We made a good team based upon unequivocal trust, things happened when we worked together.

The air indeed crackled and lives changed, ours included.

There is power in this place. The Holy Spirit moves here.

People who have worked alongside me with the children in the Cell are priests, spiritual directors, Christians of deep faith. Their praying presence is invaluable to the work here and I am grateful to their continued support and witness.

[19] Father David classically pronounced one day, 'Pauline, have you ever noticed things really start to happen when you sit down?' Yes, I have noticed that, because at that moment my work is done'. Just before he, left Fr. David took a photograph of me sitting on the altar steps, children milling around. He gave it to me saying: 'This photograph is how I will always remember you working. Sitting down!' (That of course can be taken several ways!)

What an observer might see

We started to notice physical changes in children as they entered silence. They spoke and wrote about it too, they mentioned a change in atmosphere. In the Shrine children will calm down. The pace of movement will slow and their voices naturally drop to a whisper. They will often look at each other and say, "What is happening?"

They laugh, there is much joy and laughter, young children will skip, older children hug each other. Some children will spontaneously kneel. When given the opportunity for children to be alone they will often go and hold onto the altar cloth, they say they feel close to God there. A few number go to the cell.

Many lie down, one group of boys, nine of them huddled together by the side of the altar. They called it the huddle, they later wrote: 'We were huddled together, we felt safe, it was holy, we loved the incense.'

This experience is the children's, it is their time, not to be questioned or examined. They report a sense of calmness and peace they say I simply want to be myself.

A teacher wrote: 'It is so beautiful to see children genuinely praying of their own free will'. A thirteen year old girl wrote: 'This is a really special place. I hope that it keeps its spiritual silence always, like nowhere else. Thank you for giving us this experience'.

[20] **Warmth without heat**

When entering silence, a lot of children talk about a change of temperature in particular they report a warm feeling. A Christian youth leader working with us described 'the warmth without heat' which the children were talking about. In freezing conditions of late October, with no heat in the church, children suddenly said, they felt warm.

Many have spoken of experiencing a 'tingly feeling' in their hands or a 'nice shiver' going up their spine. One reported seeing God in the prayer ribbons. "He was a young man, right at the back", he said.

In times of great stillness the children appear to have glazed eyes. They will look, at times even respond, but they are not aware, they are somewhere else. They do not want to 'come back' to reality, the children will appear visibly shaken when approached and they are deep in thought. They may smile; sometimes they will grin but not know why.

What do they think is happening to them?

They say the Shrine is a sacred place; it is a place which is beautiful and holy. It is a place to 'venerate'. They comment on the atmosphere. 'This place is amazing. I am not Christian, but it makes me feel so holy here. I cannot believe I feel like this'.

'I loved being in this place. I normally get hypo, I'm known for it, but I didn't feel giggly, it's beautiful here. You can feel the atmosphere, it's so calm. I don't usually feel like this'.

Older children refer to the Shrine as a portal to another world. They describe it as a place where heaven and earth meet, saying it is a holy place which is thinly veiled and at times it opens and you can go through to experience a world beyond.

Several years ago, after completing a Julian day for children, I asked them to complete a sheet on their way out about what memories of the day would they take away with them?

[21] Writing independently three quarters of the group wrote about sensing angels. I was astonished; we had not spoken about them. To this day it is a mystery to me what the children had experienced for none of the adults, including myself, had noticed anything unusual apart from the fact the children seemed quiet.

Some are in no doubt as to what has happened here. Children have written:

'I felt unusually happy here. I discovered God,'

'While I have been here, I have felt welcomed by God'

'It makes me feel like I can just take a moment and breathe; I can be peaceful, feel special, feel closer to God and feel like I am somewhere where I belong.'

Others have reported a dramatic change. A boy said to me, "Something has happened to me in here today. I don't feel lonely anymore. Please, can I light a candle?"

On a taped interview about her visit to the Shrine, a girl unable to sit on her chair for excitement leapt to her feet as she recalled her experience in the cell a week earlier:

I lit a candle and Wow! I knew God was real, I felt something go right through me and it was Wow, just wow! He's real! He's really real isn't He? I never knew that before but He touched me. I felt Him. Sometimes I've felt Him in the sunset, I feel as if he is watching over me and saying it's alright, it was that I felt when I lit the candle and I knew He was there and I'd felt it

before, but now I know what it is.

Many simply refer to a sense of coming home, to feeling safe.

Others just want to say thank you. A little boy aged six asked me to write a prayer for him he dictated 'Thank you for my brother. I still love him. Jesus has taken him away now, to live with Him.'

[22] **Conclusion**

As the children have said, in childhood, the veil between this world, and the next is thin; as we grow older the veil for many will become a thick and impenetrable curtain, through which no light will shine. We learn not to trust our intrinsic feelings instead we believe we must be wrong, others will laugh or say we have a vivid imagination, but in the end it simply comes down to faith and belief.

To conclude, the Julian Shrine is powerful. It is like no other place on earth. It is a place of sanctuary, somewhere to come home to. For many years the Shrine has held its treasures and secrets close to its heart, but now is the time to open our hearts, trust and believe: All Shall Be Well', because the Holy Spirit moves in this place, many have witnessed the fact through the healing and life changing events that have taken place and continue to do so here daily.

The silence here is not empty, it is full and vibrant, the air does crackle and it is so tangible you can reach out and touch it.

What happens here is instinctive, unbidden, miraculous and to the academically minded.

Extemporaneous!

Pauline Lovelock



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