



Magazine
December
2021

The Julian Meetings Magazine December 2021

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Each writer expresses their own views, which may not be held by the Editor or by the Julian Meetings Council.

The Julian Meetings

- *Foster the teaching and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition*
- *Encourage people to practise contemplative prayer in their daily lives, and explore ways of doing this which are appropriate for them*
- *Support the individual ecumenical Julian Meetings — groups whose members meet regularly to practise Christian contemplative prayer together*

For more information,
visit our website at
www.thejulianmeetings.net

This QR code will
take you directly to it



We do not charge for this magazine.

We do invite readers who enjoy the magazine, or value our promotion of contemplative prayer, to make a donation towards our costs.

A minimum donation of £3 per magazine would be much appreciated.

Please see page 31 for details of how to donate.

FOR THE JULIAN GROUP

Do not be waylaid by the tree
with the list of 'Things to Do'
pinned to its trunk.
Ignore, as you usually do,
the dusty chest
buried at its roots marked
'That which I have left undone'.
Go right on past the large rock
carved with the words
'Fear of the Future',
and the thorny tree
bearing the legend
'Things that have hurt me'.

Let your thoughts and concerns
be as the autumn leaves
swirling around in the wind,
and become the still, quiet centre
of your own storm.

Raise your head slightly
to acknowledge that a higher
place is calling you home.
This journey is just a heartbeat
but takes a lifetime to perfect.

Trust the silence to enfold you.
Feel the slight movement of air
as He raises His arms to welcome your coming;
His patience rewarded.
And you, His beloved, arrived at last.

Did you know He was waiting?

Raise your head a little further
and you will see His eyes that say
“Stay a while that I may gaze on you with love.
I ask for nothing more.”

Rest easy and learn to bear the beams of love,
for this is the harvest of all your yearning;
the very ground of your being
and your place in eternity.

Sue Sinclair

Pitton JM

Used at Whiteparish JM by Hilary Semmons.

Abiding

This beautiful word was given to me some years ago on a silent individual retreat. I was complaining to God that there were so many words in my head that I found it hard to hear him. Then it came ‘so clear it wounded me inside’ as I wrote in a poem at that time.

Abide, abiding, gives me a feeling of deep living, obedience, trust. We know that nothing can separate us from God’s love (Romans 8, v. 38-39). We live in dangerous, frightening times at the moment and in many ways the world is dark, but Jesus said ‘I am the light of the world, he who follows me will not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life’. (John 8 v. 12)

We who seek to follow Jesus on our journey through life may be hanging on by our finger tips at the moment. But that is enough. Jesus told us to abide in him which means, I think, to live only this day, this hour, this minute in heartfelt trust. Not easy: he never promised us an easy time. The road is sometimes hard and rocky, but he did promise his abiding presence. Abide in peace.

Rosemary Weekes

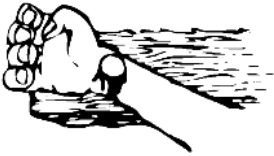
Reading JM

A Story of Christmas

The world was asleep
as God burst through time
with light and truth and love
and a baby was born



Then the world woke
and the child grew
and frightened the world.
The light was too bright
the truth too costly
the love too free.



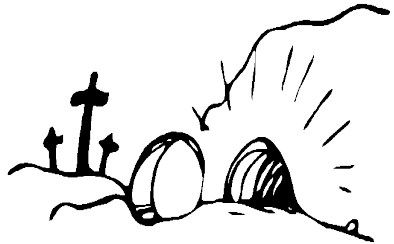
So the world stretched out
and trapped the light
and scourged the truth
and murdered the love.

And birth became death.

And the world watched
as the light grew dim
and the truth bled
and the love cried out like a child.

And the world was spent.

But light dawned
and truth rose
and love forgave
and God burst through time
and waited,
and waits,
for the world to be ready
for Christmas.



Lynne Chitty

Look, and See

The philosopher Wittgenstein advised that people at an art gallery or exhibition, “never try to rush through all the paintings on show, but choose just one painting. Sit in front of it for 20 minutes. Then get up and leave the art gallery.”

It is difficult advice to follow, but if we find ourselves in the National Gallery in Edinburgh, we could do no better than to sit in front of El Greco’s ‘The Saviour’. El Greco, born in 1541 in Crete, travelled to Venice, Rome and finally Toledo in Spain, where he died in 1614. So his art is a fusion of eastern and western traditions. In his early years El Greco trained as an icon painter, as is evident in ‘The Saviour’, a half-length figure of Christ. This Christ, like an icon, looks out at us, his right hand raised to bless us and this world, while the left hand holds that same world in His care. We can see in the eyes an inner strength, but also the poignant sadness of longing, for this Saviour has come through suffering and death to bring us new life.

As we look and see, we find in El Greco’s work a Christ-calmed steadiness amid the spinning world of rush and busyness. The nearer we draw to this Jesus, the slower we will find ourselves spinning. The duties and responsibilities that demand so much from us take their place in the wider perspective of the Saviour’s grace and love. Then we can begin to experience that peace which the world cannot offer, but which Christ can bring.

The first step in that process is to stop and look. The Curé d’Ars, a parish priest in France in the early 19th century, told how an old man sat at the back of his church every day. He didn’t seem to do anything, just sat there in the same place at the same time, looking towards the Blessed Sacrament on the High Altar. Eventually the young priest asked the man what he was doing. ‘I’m praying,’ came the reply. ‘Yes, but what exactly is it you do?’ enquired the priest. ‘Well, I look at Him and He looks at me.’

Michael Burgess

Silence in Scripture

What an extraordinary thing it is that for so long the value and quite vital importance of silence seems to have played no part in the devotional life of many devout and earnest Christians. This is particularly odd when one considers the constant emphasis on silence in Holy Scripture. Again and again in the Bible the fundamental importance of silence is underlined. It is in the silence that the voice of God is heard, and the will of God is made known.

- * Moses, contemplating the burning bush, hears God's voice.
- * Elijah, in the wilderness, suffused with self-pity, discovers his next bit of work.
- * The shepherds at Bethlehem, accustomed to the silence of the fields at night, heard the heavenly song; apparently no one else did.
- * The Blessed Apostle St Paul, after his great experience on the road to Damascus, didn't go round discussing it, but went off into retreat, into silence.
- * To St Peter, observing the hour of prayer, God reveals clearly that in his sight there is no such thing as a superior race.

All the great events connected with our redemption took place in silence.....

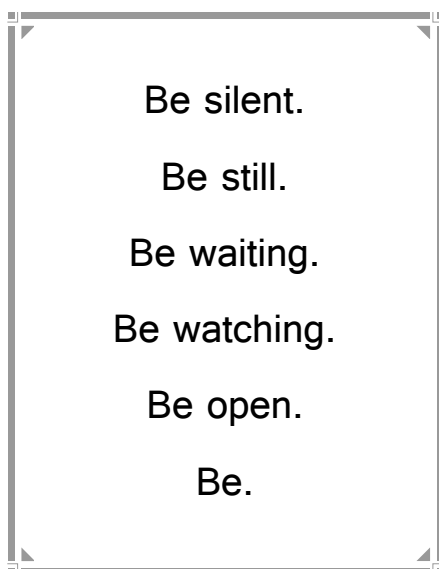
- * The incarnation, our Lord's holy birth, took place in the silence of the night.
- * The start of his ministry, preceded by the period of withdrawal into the silence of the wilderness.
- * The great mysterious event of the transfiguration took place on the mountain top, the place of silence and stillness.
- * The critical hours before his passion, in the garden of

Gethsemanne, in the silence, with his friends asleep.

- * The great stupendous happening of the resurrection took place in the silence of early dawn.

The prayer of silence is essential to any kind of deep relationship with God.

Llewelyn Fawcett
(from *Circles of Silence*)



Silent Sites?

For 4 weeks (22nd Sept. - 22nd Oct. 2021) English Heritage held 'an hour of contemplation' at 16 monastic sites during the last hour of each site's opening.

Silence was always an important element of monastic life: as St Aelred of Riveaulx Abbey said in the 12th century: 'Every where peace, every where serenity and a marvellous freedom from the tumult of the world.'

And that was before mobile phones!

Were any of you at any of the sites during this quiet hour?

Joining Together in Silence While Separated

There are two Julian Meetings each month in Wakefield, a morning one at the Chantry Chapel and an evening one at St John's Church. Neither could meet during lockdown so a lead-in and lead-out was chosen by different members, as usual. The co-ordinator then e-mailed (or posted) these to every member of both Meetings, in time to download them before the silence.

This allowed members of both Meetings to join in the silences if they wished to and were able. They could also use the lead-in and lead-out for contemplation at any time.

Both Meetings have now resumed in person. But sadly some members can no longer come, due to deteriorating health over the last 18 months. Also some are still isolating, and others have intermittent health issues which limit their participation. So we continue to send out a lead-in and lead-out twice a month, to allow those who cannot come in person to still be with us in spirit.

Julian simplicity was challenged when, to resume meeting in one church we had to provide a Risk Assessment, which (in table format) eventually ran to 5 sides of A4 paper!

Deidre Morris

Winchester Julian Meeting - Before, During and After Lockdown

Winchester Julian Meeting had five members at the beginning of April 2020. The decision to meet virtually was easily made. Our meeting consisted of an agreed reading (chosen in turn) emailed to Sue, our Coordinator, by Sunday every week, and she then emailed it to all of us in time for our 2:30 meeting every Tuesday. A few of us are also on WhatsApp and quite often a bit of chat followed the meeting.

We have an established custom of remembering past friends who have left us, because they have moved away, and also those in Heaven. Of our five members one, Valerie, was about to move to Hospice at Home care with her daughter. She died on August 3rd, 2020.

Our Group expanded to eighteen, including four members who have died but whom we feel still join with us from Heaven. Several people lived locally but, for a variety of reasons, had not been able to attend our meetings in the past. But two were in Dorset, and one was in South Africa.

I think we all found it so supportive and comforting to be together at 2:30 on Tuesdays, as we lived through the tribulations of the pandemic.

But, of course, it isn't over yet. Four of us have resumed meeting in person and a fifth hopes to come soon. And are our virtual friends not with us? They are indeed, still receiving the weekly reading and still with us on Tuesdays. I wonder if other meetings have done this?

To end, this is the last reading that Valerie sent to us in May 2020. We miss her very much.

Sue Derbyshire

Keeper of my steps

Keeper of my senses

Keeper of my soul

Keep me as the apple of your eye

Keep me in your perfect peace

Keep me in my coming in and in my going out

For you are the strong keep

Within the walls of my life.

Threads of Grace

My journey started when, as a teenager, I first discovered that working with thread can lead into a place of stillness and prayer. Going to my first Quiet Day at Edward King House in Lincoln, I followed my mother's example and took some knitting. Somehow the rhythm of the knitting, keeping the hands occupied, enabled me to let the silence enfold me, and in this quiet I could listen to God. From these early beginnings I went on to do many other kinds of working with needle, thread and fabric, including patchwork, tapestry and cross-stitch. Being engaged in these activities would bring me calm and peace, countering my tendency to worry!

Learning to make lace

In 1992, at Nottingham Lace Museum, I discovered bobbin lace making.

By then I was a Hospital Chaplain, having been in full time Anglican ministry since 1982. Though immensely rewarding and fulfilling, hospital ministry is hugely demanding physically, emotionally and spiritually.

As I wound bobbins; was absorbed in learning to make the lace; delighted in the sound, the appearance and the feel of the wooden bobbins and the rhythmical movement of 'cross and twist'; I could let go of the



stresses and cares of the day and find healing and peace.

The companionship of others in the group, and the empathy and patience of my skilled tutor, also contributed to my being refreshed and restored: when working alone at my new craft, I could find peace and enter a God-filled silence.

Part of Creation

A significant aspect of any art or craft is how we are ourselves created in the image of God. Thus we too, by His Holy Spirit, share in His work of creation; our creativity is inspired and



blessed by Him. I've found joy in making lace gifts for friends and family for special occasions, often praying for the recipient as I work.

I also delight simply in the process and recall those early desert fathers who would use

basket weaving as an aid to contemplative prayer, only to burn them when they were finished: it was the process, and not the article itself, that was most significant. Thankfully we lacemakers can generally find a home for our pieces! Now, when I take my annual retreat, my lace pillow is an essential piece of luggage! I take a pattern that is not too difficult, so that it does not take all my attention, but allows me space for contemplative prayer and reflection.

I have discovered many ways in which lace-making can be a metaphor for aspects of our spiritual lives. 'Lace' can be defined as any fabric made up of threads and the spaces in between, so in its broadest sense can include tatting, crochet and even knitting. In our lace-making we see how with thread and the spaces between we can make a beautiful fabric. So, as we make space for God in our lives, we can become the people we are created to be and share his love and beauty with our neighbours. Our lace making slows us down; it requires of us patience and risk taking; we learn how to give attention. It is these same qualities that assist us in our prayer life.

Sharing on Retreat

I'd attended embroidery retreats, but the only retreat I knew of specifically for lace makers was hosted by the Sisters of St Joseph at the Manna House of Prayer in Kansas. So in 2015,

after a sabbatical which took the form of a 'Lace Pilgrimage', I led my first retreat day for lace makers at Foxhill Conference and Retreat Centre in Chester Diocese. Encouraged by this first experience, I've led similar days at Foxhill and at Bishop Woodford House in Ely. Since 2017 I have led an annual four day retreat for Lacemakers and Crocheters at Scargill House with the title 'Threads of Grace'.

Inspirational feedback

I have been Inspired by feedback from some retreat day participants who have shared their stories of the gift of grace received through making lace together in silence. We've talked about the healing power of working with thread and of discovering the joy and quality of silence shared in the Presence of God.

The welcome and hospitality given at each of our beautiful venues has also played its part in giving us a loving Christian context. The retreats drew in both committed Christians and those who are exploring spirituality and recognising a need for silence and space in the midst of busy lives. The first group includes those who have experienced Christian retreats before and also those who, through fear of silence, have not done so until now but who've been able to take the risk by bringing along their lace!

Lockdown didn't lock us down!

During the lockdowns the residential retreats were replaced by online Quiet Days, led using Zoom. These have proved to be a source of comfort and renewal alongside monthly get-togethers for sharing our hopes and fears.

Local crafting

I regularly lead Craft sessions in my own church, some of which have been on zoom during lockdown! Participants are invited to bring along their own craft or to learn how to make something, for example, a fabric flower brooch, a Christmas decoration, a knitted Easter chick. I have gently encouraged folk to keep the conversation focussed on our craft or on

some aspect of our Christian life. These sessions include time for reflection and formal prayer, often drawing on Celtic spirituality resources. Once again, stories of renewal and healing for those suffering bereavement or loneliness, for example, have been shared with me following craft sessions.

Revd Jayne Shepherd

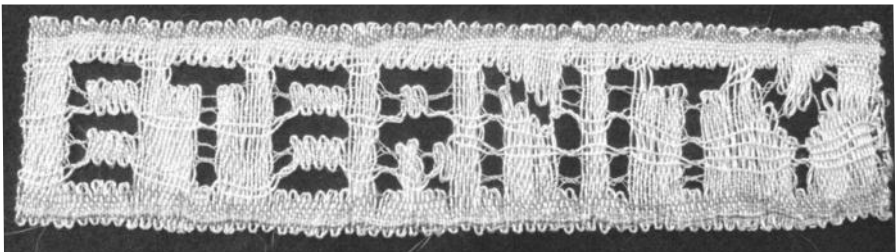
Church of England Priest from the Diocese of Liverpool.

I am helping to lead 'Getting Crafty' 24th – 27th January 2022 and a Retreat for Lace-makers and Crocheters ('Threads of Grace') 7th – 11th March 2022, both at Scargill House in the Yorkshire Dales. www.scargillmovement.org

Jayne can be contacted about her retreats and talks on her Lace Pilgrimage by telephone 01744 601043,

Eternity in Lace

A priest friend asked if I could create the word ETERNITY for her in lace. An interesting challenge! I started with patterns for the individual letters, but how to connect them? Then I reversed my thinking, literally. Seeing the letters reversed out from a lace background reminded me, and her, that we can only glimpse eternity through the fabric of this world.



It doesn't show in greyscale, but the piece has blue threads at the top, for the sky, shading down through yellow and green for creation and brown at the base for the earth.

Deidre Morris

In The Silence

This was written by David Waterfield after he had attended, for the first time, a Quaker Meeting for Worship.

Quiet

Be still

BE Quiet!

Search

For what?

Listen?

Can you hear?

BE QUIET

LISTEN!

ARE YOU DEAF!

What?

Listen?

Search!

I'm searching

For what?

Is this silence dark,

Is this silence lonely,

Is this silence cold,

Is this silence empty

A void to avoid?

This life cuts

Quick to the quick

Quick to the slow

Quick to the rich

Quicker to the poor.

We are but bits, in pieces

Stormed and blown

Winded and bent

By this world's raging

Peace less.

In my silence

Am I silently alarmed and silently armed

Am I silently self-harming to all

And so

Am I silently harmed in my silence

My mouth fails

At this world's ailing

If my ears are deaf

I do not hear my failing

Is their strength in my silence.

But Lord you are everywhere

You lead me in the dark

Your voice calls to me

Will I hear your strength

Wherever

Will I let my ears open
DO I want to hear my voice
only
DO I want to hear others
DO I want to hear
What I want

What if I've found
Searching is over
No need for my re-searching
So over and out
Out of any silence

Your arms reach out
Silently
Out reach to me
Give me your peace
In your ministry
Be my Prime Minister

Alone voice
A lone voice
In the silence asked
Are we aloned?
Silenced
In the silence

NO!
I AM your silence
My words will be yours
Be Coached and then vocal
Loudly in my name

Listen.....

Hear I AM
Forever I AM
Everywhere I AM
So here I AM
So HEAR I AM!

Then Speak Brother
Speak Sister
Speak Son
Speak Daughter
Just Speak

So in the middle of Silence
The Wonderful
The Warm
The Bright
The Calm
The Safe
The Beautiful Silence

I hear
I AM

And HE WILL SPEAK
OUT OF THE SILENCE

And HE WILL BE HEARD

Judgement (2nd Sunday in Advent)

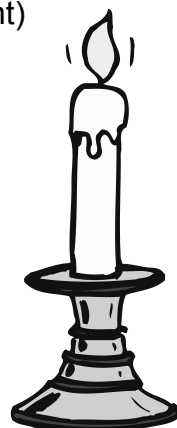
This candle manifests God's love, his light,
the greatest mystery in all creation,
shining on all without discrimination,
which we, his image mirroring, requite,

First by reflecting straight back to its source
that light and love, his great command obeying,
and then obliquely on our neighbours playing
those beams deflected, which his love endorse.

But sadly we can also, God forsaking,
show him our back, ignore the light still burning,
and face the dark, reflect only his yearning
shadow of judgement, wrath of our own making!

God's Versicle is love and light for all:

By the Response we make we stand or fall.



Denis Parry

May we sense the wonder and mystery of angels
in the hiddenness of divine presence
and the startling glimpses of unknown glory.
In the quiet random acts of kindness,
the unexpected help, the welcome of a stranger.
In the voice that speaks into our dreams
and meets our longing with promise.
Filling the skies with a Hallelujah chorus,
singing the glory of divine love,
shining in the space between earth and heaven,
radiant with the mystery of the divine,
may we sense the wonder and the mystery of the angels
adapted from a piece by Jan Berry

Art and Poetry on Our Spiritual Journey

Attending an Art, Poetry and Spirituality Day, we were given the following list to explain how both art and poetry can be our allies on our spiritual journey because they:



- * can help to create 'inner space'.
- * can encourage a spirit of silence and stillness.
- * can help people to uncover a spirit of waiting and of hope.
- * have the potential to release energy.
- * encourage a spirit of trust.
- * can act as a door, opening up new worlds for people.
- * can help people find where God is hiding.
- * encourage a new way to make connections.
- * help people to think with their feelings and to feel with their thoughts.
- * help in the discernment of moods.
- * are related to real, daily living.

It was a day that broadened my approaches to God, prayer and my own spiritual journey. Perhaps it is something you might try - and you don't have to be any good at painting or drawing! It is a means of connection between you and God and you only share your efforts if you choose to.

Sadly CARM (Christian Arts Retreat Movement) has been a victim of the pandemic, but there are retreats and quiet days which focus on art and/or poetry at many venues across the country. Many will be listed in the 'Retreats' booklet for 2022, available from the Retreat Association.

If you have benefitted from art or poetry on your spiritual journey you might like to share the experience with us.

We Are All Different!

*As a reminder that each Julian Meeting is individual,
we include some quotes from a questionnaire
we sent out a few years ago:*

This 'created space for silence' has been a spiritual life-line for a few people who have no connection to the hospice, and for some who are staff or volunteers here. It is an important space in which to off-load and find some spiritual peace. Whether anyone comes or not, it feels like an important part of the rhythm of life for the hospice, to support the work we do amongst the dying or bereaved. It is a wonderfully levelling experience, where there is no hierarchy, or liturgy, just space to explore our relationship with the divine individually, but collectively. Our Meetings have been immensely helpful to some who were feeling spiritually disconnected and adrift before they began attending. It is a time of stillness which enables us all to unwind, and that is a joy.

We only meet for the silence. We come in silence - quiet gathering music - and leave in silence. I have asked the group if they want coffee and talk after the silence but the answer is a resounding 'No!'.

It is very good to share in discussion over a cuppa after our time of silence

We have a group co-ordinator who decides the facilitator and refreshments pair for the next meeting, and a group co-ordinator who sends out a reminder e-mail each month, collects the money for the annual subscription and communicates with JM centrally. Most members take turns to facilitate a meeting but one or two do not wish to do this.

We have an annual Quiet Day to which we invite any non-members who are interested.

All find it a healing space

A majority of the members subscribe to the magazine. Six people come from 4-8 miles away.

Those who come find strength, friendship and value the silence to be still together with God.

I work with potential ordination candidates and often encourage them to attend our Julian Meeting or our Sung Compline by Candlelight (both are contemplative and very gentle). It is interesting to find how many of them have never experienced a silence like that in a Julian Meeting, and how much they really value the experience

We recently registered Meetings at:

Camden Square

Greater London

St Leonard's on Sea

East Sussex

Sheffield

South Yorkshire

If you've read, or come across, any books on prayer, contemplation, meditation or spirituality that you think would be of interest to other people in the Julian Meetings, please could you e-mail the book details to Peter, our Reviews Editor, at:

bookreviews@thejulianmeetings.net

He is always pleased to hear about new books, or reprints of older books, that we might wish to review.



Developing The Spoken Word

For many years we've provided audio versions of our core literature, about Julian Meetings and contemplative prayer, for people with visual impairment. These were on tape, and then on CD as technology developed, though we were limited by the capacity of both tapes and CDs,

However, life moves on. Today's technology enables many people, not just the visually impaired, to listen in a wide variety of ways: podcasts, audio-books, sound files etc. Many people prefer this to reading, and it is accessible while on the move - travelling, jogging, walking the dog.....

So we are making as much of our material as possible also available in audio formats. We've started by having many existing recordings freely available on the website, and will be re-recording the existing sound files as we update the literature.

We are exploring making our literature recordings available through podcasts and developing a podcast version of the magazine. We may also develop other video and audio recordings.

We hope that adding a podcast platform to our website and social media will help spread the word about Julian Meetings and reach a wider audience.

JM's ethos is to keep things as simple and low cost as we can, and use our own resources if possible. Sometimes we have to employ specialists, such as Susan Weeks, of Virtuality Works <https://podcastprogress.com> who has been helping us develop our strategy and skills. She is guiding us in the technicalities of recording, podcasts etc. and also advising us on equipment and software and the best way to make our written resources available through the spoken word.

If you have any thoughts, suggestions, comments, or could help in any way with this project we will be delighted to hear from you. Email Ann Moran it@thejulianmeetings.com

Thoughts

Our dealings with God, and God's dealings with us, are many and varied. Here are some thoughts on this.

People

There are good dealings with God in people, times when we do

“Walk cheerfully over the world, meeting God in everyone” and the God in them reaches out to us in encouragement, comfort and love. At other times we can find nothing of God in the people we are engaging with.

Then the God in us may be the God who nudges, offers humour, tolerance, even an admonitory shake of the head. Perhaps, in retrospect, we acknowledge regret, contrition and the hope that we will do better next time.

Church

The God we seek in church is not always there for us. There are times of vision, awe, thankfulness and comfort but there may be an absence, irritation, even boredom. The kernel of God may be in the community, the fellowship, the rejoicing or grieving together. At best, the waft of incense and the drifting smell of the unwashed, wood-smoked tramp in the back pew mingle, and become one.

Absence

Often, we have no dealings with God. Absence is more on our part than on God's. We forget, are too busy, neglectful, are deliberately elsewhere. Yet sometimes even when we are trying to Be...Here...Now... there is apparent emptiness.

“Why no! I have never thought other than
That God is that great absence
In our lives, the empty silence within”.

Duty

And what of: “The daily round, the common task ...
To furnish all we ought to ask.

Room to deny ourselves,
A road that brings us daily close to God"?
What God offers and what we accept can be a fruitful meeting
place too often forgotten.

Rewards and Punishments

Our dealings may be coloured by old concepts, the grey fog of guilt, the crimson of a vengeful God. But:

"Whose little virtues deserve everlasting life in the
vision of God?
And whose vices deserve the gnawing flames of
everlasting remorse?"

Sickness

In sickness of body or mind it may be that our dealings with God are fragmentary - an inarticulate hanging on. In the depths we may find reassurance or perhaps none:

"No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief
Comforter, where is thy comforting?"

It may not be until the pain has lessened that we look back and recognise the upholding and the infinite care – God dealing with us through the hands of others, for he has none but ours.

Anger, Bewilderment, Hurt

Dealings with God may be raw and angry. Why...? Why...? Was the creation worth it? Why don't you...? An honest rant may bring us closer to that unfathomable mystery we call God, though the unanswered questions may turn some of us away. One can find all that in the book of Job.

Beauty

And what of beauty? The blue of the lake and the greenness of the shore; Louis Armstrong's husky voice and the robin's winter song; the bliss of the bed and the benison of a good night's sleep. Are these momentary whiffs of eternity? They are certainly moments "in and out of time".

Silence

In solitary or communal silence or contemplation there may be, and it is always uncertain, a moment when we and God almost merge.

“The eye with which I see God is the same as that with which God sees me. My eye and the eye of God are one eye, one vision, one knowledge and one love. My eye and the eye of God are one.”

[Quotations are, in order, from: George Fox, R.S.Thomas, George Herbert, Austin Farrer, G.M.Hopkins, T.S.Eliot, Meister Eckhart]

Janet Robinson, Hay JM



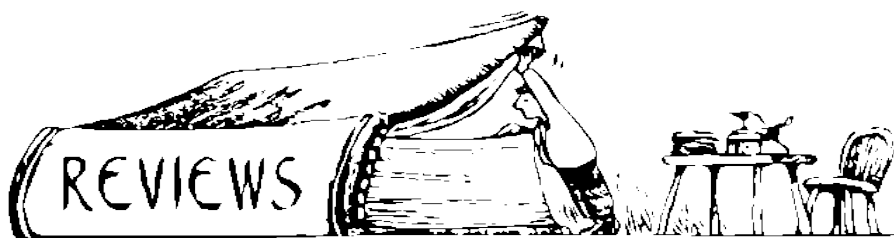
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But we no longer ask you to pay a subscription for this. What we do ask you to do is to donate as much as you wish to, according to your means and what you feel JM is worth.

Meeting Contacts

As usual Meeting Contacts will receive a form with this issue of the magazine, asking you to renew the registration for your Meeting for 2022. This costs £12 for the year, and the copy of the magazine for your members to share will be posted to the first contact.



THE JOY OF GOD. COLLECTED WRITINGS

Sister Mary David Totah

Bloomsbury, 2020.

Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4729 7132 6. Price £12.99.

eBook. ISBN 978-1-4729 7130 2. Price £10.39.

Sr Mary David was a member of the Benedictine Community of St Cecilia's Abbey on the Isle of Wight. Born in the USA in 1957, she entered the religious life in 1985 after a distinguished teaching career. For 22 years she guided novices with kindness, wisdom and wit, until her death from inoperable cancer at the age of 60.

The book is a compilation of her writings and notes to novices and includes a foreword giving brief details of her life and an epilogue containing a moving account of her last years as she dealt with her illness with an indomitable courage. Her writings have been edited under the headings Search, Decision, Growth, Freedom, Endurance, Mercy, Darkness and Light. Sr Mary David was clearly a delightful, remarkable and inspiring woman whose watchwords were the Joy of God. She reflects on her own journey with both the joys and the difficulties of the religious life and does so with humour and simplicity. In her view, 'when we allow ourselves to look ahead and be discouraged, it usually means we are focusing too much on ourselves. The true grace is to forget oneself, and living in the present moment helps us to do that and gives us the strength and courage to respond.'

If I have a criticism, it is that I would like to know some of the questions and problems of the novices to which she gave answers. Many of those answers are clearly made to individuals who she encouraged, advised and sometimes

corrected, always with humour and a common sense which was both practical and profound. This is not a book to be read straight through but if dipped into for quiet meditation the reader will not be disappointed.

Janet Robinson

A RHYTHM OF PRAYER. A selection of meditations for renewal

Edited by Sarah Bessey

SPCK. 2020.

Hardback. ISBN 978 0 281 08515 6. Price. £14.99.

eBook. ISBN978 0 281 08516 3. Price. £11.99.

Also available from Amazon on Kindle. Price £8.14.

This beautiful book, inside and out, would make a lovely gift. The contributors to this deep and colourful collection are writers, leaders, ministers and activists from across the world.

I was intrigued by the title *Rhythm of prayer*. The rhythm Sarah refers to is those Circles of Prayer (prayer gatherings) in which she 'grew up and came of age', particularly those with women. This recaptures the warmth and sincerity of those prayers: longing and thanksgiving, joy and sorrow.

Three sections take us through a pattern for personal renewal: Orientation, Disorientation and Reorientation. The pieces are mostly four pages long. Some could be appropriate to open a Julian meeting, as in 'A Prayer to Breathe by', 'Finding Rest', and 'A Centering Practice for Prayer'. Other pieces are a 'Liturgy for Disability', 'Prayer of a Weary Black Woman' and a 'Prayer for the Tired, Angry Ones' and some more challenging subjects as 'A Prayer Against Efficiency' or 'Examen Your Politics'.

The book draws to a close with a delightful piece: 'The Lantern and the Wildflower' and finally a beautiful Benediction by the Editor. I found this an enchanting book, different from others on my bookcase, both reassuring and energizing.

Fiona Elliott

THE WISDOM OF WILD GRACE. Poems

Christine Valters Painter

Paraclete Press, USA. 2020.

Paperback. ISBN 978 1 64060 558 9. US\$20.00,

and available from Amazon for £16.00.

Also available as Kindle from Amazon. Price £11.63

The author of this attractive collection of poems is the Abbess of the Abbey of the Arts, a virtual monastery integrating contemplative practice and creative expression. Its website is: <https://abbeyofthearts.com>.

Painter writes that 'our personal well-being is intimately woven together with the well-being of all creation and plants. ... The more we can cultivate our own intimacy with the wild, the more we open to different truth. Wildness doesn't mean we have to go out into the forest or travel long ways; the wild is a place within us.'

The poems invite us to step into this inner wildness and to be present to what we discover there. They are not specifically oriented to a Christian standpoint, although many come out of a Christian background. Poems of Celtic and other saints, and hermits in the desert, all involve animals. Some are beautifully illustrated by David Hollington. Others are inspired by psalms of creation. Myths and fairy tales are also represented.

A favourite poem of mine is 'St Gall and the Bear'. An Irish monk in a Swiss forest is charged by a bear. The saint holds out bread for the animal, which returns that evening with a bundle of logs. These make a fire before which saint and bear sit. The poem ends:

When the great bear of your life
charges toward you, nourish it
with the bread of your kindness.
When it comes carrying kindling,
sit down with it, see what is sparked
and what shapes dance in the flame.

Peter Rowe

A SENSE OF TIPTOE and other articles of faith.

Poems by Karen Hayes

Holland Park Press. 2020.

Paperback. ISBN 978 1 907320 93 4. Price. £8.00.

‘Imagination makes two worlds one... it speaks from the one world within all worlds, the eternal dimension deep within every place and time’. This quote from John Philip Newell’s *Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul* captures the essence of Hayes’ poetry.

Iconic churches, atmospheric locations, paintings and religious artefacts inspire her, letting the past converse with the present.

The poems reflect on faith in the largest sense, both religious and in creation; we are drawn into a shared experience of tenderness, humour and sadness. As Hayes is a musician and actor, the poems have vigour and rhythm, story and surprise. Her language is a delight to be savoured, spoken aloud and shared with friends. The tiniest detail is noticed and enjoyed.

In ‘At the Cathedral’, above a priestly tomb a tiny angel holds a crowned strawberry for its occupant’s delight. ‘Bells’ records notes from the bell ringers’ annual meeting. In the last verse, to our surprise, we discover they are from pre-WW1.

Cataloguing the fabric of a parish church becomes a pilgrimage journeying with the faithful over the centuries. My favourites include ‘These Thanet Skies’ a homage to the painter JM Turner and his glorious work, and ‘The Hurlers’, a hurling team destined to be frozen in a stone circle as punishment for playing the game on a Sunday, when they should have been in church.

Ann Morris

WALKING THE WAY OF THE CROSS: Prayers and Reflections on the Biblical Stations of the Cross ***Stephen Cottrell, Paula Gooder and Philip North***

Church House Publishing. 2019.

Paperback. ISBN 978-0 7151-2344-7. Price £9.99.

The Stations of the Cross (signposted in Jerusalem as the Way of the Cross or *via dolorosa*) will be familiar to all

Catholics, many Anglicans, and some other Christians. There were originally 14 stations marking the passion and death of our Lord. They began with his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, followed by his arrest and condemnation, the incidents that occurred as he walked to Calvary. They culminated with his crucifixion and death, but in recent times a 15th station (the Resurrection) has been added.

Catholic churches mark each station by a picture or sculpture on the walls. At each station the scripture passage on which it is based is read, followed by a reflection and prayer. The stations are most often used in Lent and Holy Week, although some use the devotion throughout the year.

There are three reflections for each station: theologian Paula Gooder reflects on the scriptural narratives; Archbishop Stephen Cottrell's perspective is that of personal discipleship; and Bishop Philip North explores the story's challenge to mission and witness. The Archbishop's reflections, in particular, might appeal to not a few Julian Meetings.

Peter Rowe

THE WISDOM OF ST BENEDICT.

Monastic spirituality and the life of the Church

Luigi Gioia

Canterbury Press. 2020.

Paperback. ISBN 978 1 78622 309 8. Price £13.59.

eBook. Price £16.99.

How do we find the wisdom to keep up with our age of rapidly expanding technology and knowledge? In this engaging and wise book Luigi Gioia offers us a way both scriptural and contemporary as it delves into the intricacies of our human nature, dwelling on our need to cultivate a genuine life of prayer.

Using images in Proverbs chapters 2 and 8, he says that in his monastic life, after pondering and preaching on wisdom, he discovered that 'Wisdom is not just a quality we acquire, but something - or better *someone* - we are called to become. This, I think, is the reason she is personified in Scripture'. He

later says that the present crises in the Church arise because we 'have ceased to be men and women of prayer' (p.36).

Fr. Luigi explores the depths of the scriptural insights of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. He urges our need to face courageously the deserts, the trials of life that we encounter, as goads into greater self-knowledge in the presence of the love of God. The confidence we lean on in such a challenge is the image of Christ in his temptations, for we need reminding that 'Christianity is first of all about cultivating a personal relation of trust and love with God' (p.94).

I most warmly commend this book to all who long to shape their lives by prayer.

Sister Mary John Marshall, O.S.B. Malling Abbey

THE INTERIOR SILENCE. Ten lessons from monastic life ***Sarah Sands***

Short Books (an imprint of Octopus Books). 2021.

Hardback. ISBN 978-178072454 6. Price £12.99.

Also available from Amazon on Kindle. Price £7.99.

Journalist Sarah Sands was editor of BBC Radio 4's Today Programme. She starts by describing her working life - sleep interrupted by night time phone calls; information overload; stress and insomnia. A ruined 13th century monastery in her garden made her wonder if the monastic life might have any her signposts for her stressed, chaotic lifestyle. Led by her need to deal with her exhaustion, she visited 10 monasteries, staying for a short time and participating in the monastic life. They included Buddhist monasteries in Japan and Bhutan, a Coptic Church one in the Egyptian desert, Salzburg (music and monasticism), Assisi, and Lindisfarne.

This is not a 'how to' book but an account of her encounter with silence in different monasteries. Part travel story, part historical account, part pilgrimage but always showing the impact the monastic way had on her. Her encounters were life changing.

Gail Ballinger

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