

Planes, Trains and Automobiles

That's how Affiliates of the Order of Julian of Norwich arrived, from fifteen states and two Canadian provinces, for the 33rd annual Julian Retreat and JulianFest, held at the Redemptorist Retreat Center in rural Oconomowoc.

The Rev. Dr. Holly Ratcliffe, ObjN led the retreat, presenting her well-researched thoughts on how Julian's personal history may have led to her face-to-face encounters with the crucified Jesus. We were in silence, except during the Divine Offices and the Eucharist.

JulianFest began Saturday. Professor David Carlson of Franklin College in Franklin, IN spoke movingly about his research on how monastic orders responded to 9/11 -- a very different response from what we all saw in the media and heard on the streets. Prof. Carlson makes a strong case that only monastic wisdom can bring peace to the world.

Saturday evening we were treated with entertainment provided by -- what else? -- Julian Affiliates!

What are Julian Affiliates?

Julian Affiliates are men and women, Oblates and Associates, who respond to the Holy Spirit's invitation to draw nearer to Jesus. The monks and nuns of the Order are the still point at the center of a worldwide network of lay and ordained people who have chosen to live under a rule of poverty, chastity, obedience and prayer, bringing spiritual renewal to the Church through contemplative witness.

What draws a person to undertake such a demanding rule of life?

"At the time of my affiliation, I was wrestling with my faith (or lack of it) in God. I was tired of running from God and sought direction and faith in my life."

"What originally drew me was the OJN-sponsored pilgrimage to the English cathedrals. The inner peace and calm that radiated from those pilgrims attracted me."

"Some Affiliates come searching for an Order, a Rule, a way to live the monastic life in the world, and happen upon Julian like a Forty-Niner panning a massive gold nugget from the muddy river water, and this is a simply wonderful way to come to the Order."

"The rule sustains and articulates the life I have been given by God."

For most of us in contemporary society, the thought of vowing to be obedient to something outside our own needs and wants is strange. I asked some Affiliates what obedience means to them:

"Obedience means placing my life in God's hands every day in every circumstance, trusting that no matter what happens, all will be well."

"To me, obedience means listening -- listening in prayer, listening to my spiritual director, listening to the Julian Guardian and Wardens, listening to my bishop, listening to all I come in contact with, listening attentively."

Why Julian?

"I had read *Julian's Revelations of Divine Love* way back in 1995 and found it hard going. But the experience of grappling with Julian's text won me over."

"Julian has a totally loving and radically optimistic theology."

"Julian brought me to the Order, she called me home."

"Mother Julian, simply put, keeps me Christ-centered."

To learn more about the Order of Julian of Norwich and Julian, visit:

orderofjulian.org

gloriana.nu

light-for-the-journey.org