Misogyny – an Intersectional Survey
by Diane Dougherty, ARCWP

At the intersection of misogyny and the experience of being women, we all stand violated. Misogyny is the multifaceted hydra that maintains women’s inequality for the benefit of the patriarchy. It is a social construct that attacks women in the home, on the street, in the city, and the state and/or nation as it defines for women who they are, where they can be located, the limits of their participation in society, and their value in terms of how well they stay in their assigned space.

Misogyny engenders terror and trauma for those who stray out of that assigned space, and who remain silent in its face, while accomplishing one of its goals: diminishing women’s full experience of humanity. The authors in Hating Girls: An Intersectional Survey of Misogyny provide a glimpse of the landscape on which misogyny is practiced. Each author uses her unique creativity and innovation to minimize its function, encouraging the readers to follow suit. In essence, the authors are providing new pathways for the next generation of women to create a sustainable sense of wellbeing and equal status.

Misogyny is an insidious energy that blinds those under its influence to such a degree that they become complicit in their own oppression. While some women become blind, deaf, and dumb to the reality that life could be different, others look at that difference and fear it. Satisfaction, comfort, and contentment are the hallmarks of complicity and are major roadblocks to women wanting and supporting the movement toward gender equality.

Hating Girls asks readers to stop, reflect, and engage emphatically with women. It further asks them to take a brave, contemplative look at the scope of issues embedded in our societal DNA. It wants every reader to understand how the forces of misogyny have pummeled the spirit of each of our sisters, focusing on ourselves as well as those who are rising. It calls us to identify and talk about our own journeys as we continue to push out fear and rise. This is its hope: shared power by facing the terror and trauma that will not quell us as we journey to offer the next generation a path toward gender equality.

While the hardcover book is available through Amazon, our website makes each individual chapter available to download. The paperback will come out next summer. Please contact Diane Dougherty, ARCWP, at https://hatinggirlsonline.com/ if you are interested in joining a study group or have additional questions.

Hating Girls: An Intersectional Survey of Misogyny is the second book in a series of collaborations led by ARCWP Priests Mary Sue Barnett (Louisville, KY) and Debra Meyers, Ph.D. (Batavia, OH). Diane Dougherty, ARCWP, (Avondale Estates, GA) is a contributor.

Diane Dougherty, ARCWP, is an activist priest advocating for gender justice most particularly within the Roman Catholic Church and other religious institutions.

In 2021, Pope Francis initiated a two-year open dialogue in which he invited Catholics to express their views of the hopes, dreams, and challenges attendant to living their faith in the 21st century. The Pope said in his homily: “Time to look others in the eye and listen to what they have to say, to build rapport, to be sensitive to the questions of our sisters and brothers, to let ourselves be enriched by the variety of charisms, vocations, and ministries.”

Since 2002, the Roman Catholic Women Priests’ movement has offered the gift of a new model of priestly ministry in inclusive communities of equals where all are welcome to celebrate sacraments at an open table. In this synodal dialogue, I hope that Pope Francis listens with an open heart to the voices of Catholics on their lived experiences of partnership in ministry in egalitarian communities.

Catholicism is at a crossroads on the role of women. While Pope Francis has appointed some women to decision-making roles at the Vatican, he has failed to dialogue with women priests or people in our communities around the world. The synod gives an opportunity for such a dialogue to take place.

We need to raise the following questions: will the institutional Church continue to be a top-down hierarchical organization that punishes faithful dissent and clings to medieval doctrine, practices, and structures that discriminate against women? Will the Church embrace the full equality and moral agency of women in all aspects of their lives and in all ministries – including ordination?

The synodal dialogue can chart a new path forward by affirming the primacy of conscience for all Catholics, including women priests who are called to serve their sisters and brothers in public ministry in the Church.

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Julian of Norwich Is Nothing If Not Persistent

by: Shelley Gilchrist

have never heard the voices of those who have passed through the thin space. While I imagine my dear ones, and I remember their counsel, I do not hear them. But then I encountered the mystic and theologian, Julian of Norwich. I confess to bandying about her phrase, “All Shall Be Well,” innumerable times during the height of the pandemic. Phrases like “Where is my mask? Do I need a booster? My family is coming; should I get a Covid test? Am I breathing normally, and what about voting rights?” were repeatedly followed by my mantra, “Every manner of things shall be well.” But then Dame Julian herself started bothering me. She whispered, “Really? My revelations and writings took 50 years to refine and 300 years to publish and you have distill them to a single phrase or two?” To which I would reply, “But I always gave you credit!” She sighed loudly, implying I was a lazy student, and told me to “dig and ditch.” Her words. She insisted I mine her teachings beyond the obvious. And I listened.

We have few biographical details of this intriguing mystic, because to her they were not important. She arbitrarily recorded her age as 30 on May 8, 1373, the first night of her “showings,” and died sometime after 1416. She was only six when the Black Plague ravaged the city of Norwich and 38 years old during the bloody Peasants’ Revolution. Julian never commented on these horrific events. We know she is the first woman to have written substantially in the English language, as a contemporary of Chaucer’s, and probably owed her literacy to the Benedictine nuns. Her use of maternal metaphor speaks not only to her closeness with her mother, but to her having been a mother as well. It is not a reach to assume she lost her family during the plague, as one in three persons did succumb. And her given name may or may not even be Julian. She was, after all, an anchoress at St. Julian’s Church in Norwich.

Whether it was because death surrounded her or to know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings (Phil.3:10), Julian had long prayed for a near-death experience. Her prayer was answered on that late night in May 1373. The parish priest arrived as she was experiencing near-total paralysis. He held the crucifix inches away from her and all but the face of Jesus showed no agony. Instead of woe, Julian was given the first of 16 “Revelations of Divine Love.” She proclaimed “Divine Love is boundless and will continue forever” and felt an unshakeable security. Julian recovered quickly and recorded her showings immediately. What followed were decades of prayer and reflection, resulting in the “long text” or Revelations of Divine Love. Julian’s message of God’s goodness and unconditional love was in total contradiction to the medieval church’s teaching of God’s wrath and damnation. With no scientific data available, the Church saw the plague as punishment for a fallen and wretched human race. All of nature and humankind were sinfully corrupt, and only in redemptive theology was salvation to be achieved by faith in the Church’s teachings. Julian, however, was to discover a different truth. She had been given a new perspective on the nature of God.

Julian followed in the steps of visionary mystics Thomas Aquinas, Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart, and Mechthild of Magdeburg. The latter is quoted as saying, “God is not only fatherly. God is also Mother who lifts Her loved child from the ground to Her knee,” and we are “surrounded with the roundness of divine compassion.” Similarly Julian shares, “Jesus is our true mother in whom we are endlessly carried and out of whom we will never come. In our creation we were knit and oned to God. It is a precious oneness.” The motherhood of the Divine, the joy of creation, and our being loved and enmeshed within them feel progressive, but this original blessing theology is as ancient as Genesis 1. God saw what S/H/He had made, “And it was very good.” As we grow in our understanding of this oneness and beauty of all things, we truly live and move and have our being within the All. I am journeying this path. Leaning on and learning from the Holy One and each other is tangible. There is peace.

But lest we think Julian is a Pollyanna, she speaks of woe as well. For her, we must live into suffering, not run from it. She warned us, “Sometimes we experience such darkness we lose all our energy.” I know that feeling well. Just living in a world fraught with pain can produce spiritual and physical lethargy. Julian tells us to remember life is short. While we walk the via negativa, we must not lose sight of the goodness on the roadside. Remembering “Divine love is boundless and will continue forever” can return our steps to the via positiva, and we will be stronger for our learning. This is the perpetual two-step we each must dance.

Julian’s wisdom also came from being a careful observer. Her anchorhold had two windows. One was to the interior of the church to witness the Mass and the other to a well-traveled path that led to the village and the bustling port. Margery of Kempe, another mystic, wrote of Julian’s encounters with sailors and townfolk who often sought her spiritual direction. Margery spent many hours seeking her advice. Julian had two helpers throughout her lifetime, Sara and Alice. She also always enjoyed the presence of a cat. When I remarked that a dog might have been cozier, she insisted dogs had inferior mousing skills.

Sara and Alice assisted Julian with her humblest needs. Rather than proclaiming our bodies unclean, Julian exclaimed, “God is in our sensuality. . . . It is through our bodies, grounded in nature, that we learn compassion and grace.” Julian saw this as another way Our Creator honors and celebrates the Divine Feminine. No “unclean” for Julian; the Divine is in all, all the time. Perhaps we can rewrite the Holiness Code in Leviticus.

Julian of Norwich lived a long life. She was the beneficiary of four wills and, with some family money, sustained herself. And she was whip smart! Although not in written circulation, there were those who knew of her showings, listened to her wisdom, and sought her advice. She spent decades unfolding the truths she had received. And I smile when I think of her developing her legend within her own time.

There is little space in this writing to explore fully what this mentor and spiritual mother has meant to me on my faith journey. Her words have been a most precious gift. I also owe much to Matthew Fox, who must have been “bothered” by Dame Julian, because he published in 2020, Julian of Norwich: Wisdom in a Time of Pandemic and Beyond.” It was his first time carefully studying her work. Also, he and Mirabai Starr have recently developed a seminar surrounding Julian, which in my spare time I would love to explore.

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I do not believe in coincidence. I am "shown" reality when I am ready and even desperate to receive it. Julian said, "The soul has two duties. One is to wonder; be in 'awe and surprised.' And the other is, "Let go and take pleasure in God." Well, my dear medieval sister, I love surprises, and you have given me those and affirmations as well. I am learning to let go of what I cannot control. It is not easy, but you have touched my soul and showed me how. We are truly oneing. As you observed: "All Shall Be Well, and All Shall Be Well, and All Manner of Things Shall Be Well."  

Shelley Gilchrist, ARCWp, is a mother and a Grammy. She has worked as an educator in speech, theatre, and English and is also a singer/actor/director. Most recently, she worked as chaplain for VITAS hospice, a very holy ministry of presence. Her love for the beatitudes has led her to volunteer for peace and justice organizations.

JESUS, the HOUSE of ISRAEL, and the RETURN of SHEKINAH

By: Clare Julian Carbone

Scholars have long acknowledged the correlation between the first male followers of Jesus and the twelve tribes of Israel. As we prepare to celebrate Easter and the coming of the Holy Spirit, might there be relevant insights regarding this relationship for us to consider? In her brilliant psychological commentary on the book of Genesis, The Murmuring Deep, Jewish theologian Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, Ph.D., shares two stunning observations which serve to guide us.

In her chapter entitled “What if Joseph Hates Us?,” Dr. Zornberg brings to our attention the fears uttered by Joseph's brothers after the death of their father, Jacob. She suggests that what initially were regarded by the brothers as gestures of reconciliation (when Joseph wept, took them in, and cared for them), were now thought of as mere pretense for Jacob's sake.

Now that Jacob was no longer among them, Joseph was free to reveal his true intentions of retaliation for being deprived all those years of his father's love, his home, and his culture. Her commentary underscores the trepidation, guilt, and distrust which lingered in the hearts of the brothers as they expressed concern for their own safety: "What if Joseph hates us and pays us back for all the evil that we did to him?" (Gen.50:15) In referencing Talmud and Kabbalah reflections, Zornberg further establishes the perspective that, in not receiving Joseph's genuine, face-to-face words of forgiveness, his brothers were never truly absolved of their sin against him.

We are presented here with the unsettling prospect of a never-reconciled relationship between Joseph and his brothers. And we are left with the speculation of an unhealed wound still lingering within the foundational core of the House of Israel. Coupled with this is Jacob's dismay in his realization that Shekinah, the Abiding Feminine Dwelling of God, had withdrawn Her Presence, leaving him to bless his sons without Her prophetic guidance. In noting both the unresolved rift among Joseph's brothers and the seemingly related withdrawal of Shekinah's Presence, it behooves us further to consider Jesus' greeting to His disciples after His Resurrection.

From the Editor

By: Nori Kieran-Meredith

When Shelley Gilchrist asked me how long her column should be, I replied 450 words. I was not taking into account Dame Julian of Norwich, who had very different ideas. It seems she commandeered Shelley's assignment, tripling its length. I wasn't prepared to argue with Julian, so we opted to let Ever Juarez, our graphic designer, shoehorn Shelley's column into the newsletter.

Apart from Julian's, or Shelley's, enchanting contribution, the columns in this newsletter are hugely different one from the other. I didn't even attempt to derive a unifying theme from them. But each is delightful in its own way. Clare Julian treats us to a discussion of the Shekinah. Diane Dougherty introduces us to her own scholarship and that of our ARCWp sisters Mary Sue Barnett and Debra Meyers in Hating Girls. And, as always, Bridget Mary Meehan keeps us current on the Church front.

This newsletter offers something for everyone!
Dancing the *Oberek*  
*By: Janice Sevre-Duszynska*

My uncle taught me how to dance the *oberek*, Uncle Enrush (Henry) who spoke fewer words to his wife and my cousins than a monk at Gethsemani. Uncle Henry wearing his Sunday, his only, suit which I identified with his joyous side that danced and smiled and, yes, even talked despite the bombing and screaming inside from the War, held out his arms to me and his face took on a glow as if he had been up all night reading Miczkiwicz's romantic epic of a free independent Poland in front of a fireplace which no one that we knew ever had in their house. 

"Now stomp your feet this measure," he told me, "let the earth feel the stirring of your soul." I followed his movement and was transported to the veranda of an estate in the heart of Poland that always stayed Polish, ground whence I came.

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ClareJulian Carbone  
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As recorded in the Gospels, Jesus appeared to the fearful eleven taking refuge in the upper room. He greeted them face-to-face with the words, “Peace be with you,” reassuring them of His forgiveness and instructing them in their call also to forgive. He then breathed on them the Holy Spirit. (John 20:19ff)

By His face-to-face encounter with those who had abandoned Him, was Jesus in essence re-entering the unreconciled, spiritual depths of Joseph’s wound? Was He fulfilling the needed act of forgiveness and thereby restoring wholeness to the House of Israel? Was the breath of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples the prelude to the longed-for return of Shekinah’s abiding Presence?

We note Jesus’ words recorded in the Gospel of Luke as they pertain to our reflection, “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sin would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Lk.24:46ff)

As lovers and followers of Christ, we each have been called to share in His ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). Forgiveness is key to our healing and to unleashing the universal life force of Shekinah, known to us now as the Holy Spirit. May we humbly embrace this ministry, and with grateful hearts joyfully proclaim, "Alleluia, Alleluia!“

ClareJulian Carbone, LCSW, ARCWP, is a therapist and spiritual director who resides and works in Salt Lake City. Ordained in 2015 with ARCWP, she is actively involved in interfaith dialogue, prayer, and friendship.

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In 2002, on the Danube River, seven women were validly ordained Roman Catholic priests. The principal consecrating Roman Catholic male bishop who ordained our first women bishops is one with apostolic succession in communion with the Pope within the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, all qualified candidates who are presented to our bishops for ordination are ordained in apostolic succession by the laying on of hands. According to man-made canon law, the Church may consider us illicit, but our ordinations are valid.

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Janice Sevre-Duszynska. ARCWP, has been an activist for women’s ordination since cleaning the priests’ sacristy in grade school. A writer and composer, she has worked on media for the women priests movement since its beginnings. Janice co-directs the Baltimore Nonviolence Center in Maryland and participates in various actions in Washington, DC. She is a former Prisoner of Conscience for SOAW.

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