



## Lil' Red Wagon

of the Servant of God Julia Greeley

official newsletter of  
**The Julia Greeley Guild**  
 a ministry of  
 the Cathedral Basilica of the  
 Immaculate Conception, Denver

**Forty-first Issue 7-28-2023**  
**Special Summer Edition**

## Mary Lange Venerable ♥

Pope Francis, on June 22, declared on June 22 that Servant of God Mother Mary Lange practiced the virtues to a heroic degree, thus making her a Venerable. She is now the fourth of the "Saintly Six" African Americans to be raised to that level; and, once a miracle through her intercession can be approved, she can be beatified.

The other three Venerables Pierre Toussaint, Mother Henriette De Lille, and Fr. Augustus Tolton, were declared Venerable in 1996, 2010, and 2019.

Servants of God Julia Greeley and Sr. Thea Bowman are still having their positios prepared for deliberation by historical, theological, and ecclesiastical commissions.



## Visit to the Ryan House ♥

The Wagon recently visited the Queen Anne home at 5127 Lowell Blvd., one of the venues where Julia cooked and kept house for the Ryan sisters in the early 1900s, and



was wonderfully surprised to see there a Sacred Heart stained glass window in the transom above the front door and another in the house's main staircase.

Another marvelous find for Julia's story was the servant's staircase: a back-of-the-house set of slender stairs connecting the basement, kitchen, and attic servant's quarters.

(Photos courtesy of Callie Seymour.)

## A Possible Miracle ♥

Deacon Joseph Nowak has informed the Guild that a parishioner, originally from Brazil, came to him after a weekday Mass at Spirit of Christ Catholic Community in Arvada in December 2022 or January 2023 to ask for his prayers.

She had cancer in 2021, received treatment, and the cancer had gone into remission. But now she had just learned that the cancer had come back aggressively and

was considered to be at stage IV, having spread throughout her body, notably on her spine, lungs, and elsewhere.

They prayed, and Nowak asked if she had heard of Julia Greeley. She hadn't and he recommended that she ask Julia for help. He gave her basic information on Julia, her life and love for the Sacred Heart and told her how to venerate Julia's remains at the Cathedral.

She decided to ask Julia for help as she began aggressive treatments for the newly-emergent cancer, and even went to the Cathedral that very afternoon and prayed at Julia's tomb.

Over the last six months, she maintained the chemotherapy treatments and made several other visits to the Cathedral for Mass and to visit Julia's tomb. She seemed up-beat and reported her joyfulness to the deacon on several occasions.

Just recently, on June 28, she approached Nowak after Mass to say that the day before her doctor told her a PET scan indicated the cancer, which had been at Stage IV about six months earlier, was now almost gone. The doctor had no medical explanation for this status and could not understand why she had not lost her thick long dark hair during the chemo treatments.

The parishioner said her last chemotherapy appointment is in August. There are still some small cancers on her lungs. She agreed to share her story with the Guild as a possible miraculous intercession by Julia.

## Julia's Birthday Party ♥

About 20 Guild members celebrated a Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart on June 26 to honor Julia Greeley's on her 143<sup>rd</sup> spiritual birthday.

Not even Julia knew the date of her physical birth, so in 2021, the Guild decided to celebrate annually the anniversary of her

spiritual birth in Baptism at Sacred Heart Church on June 26, 1880.

Father Eric Zegeer, administrator of Julia's Parish, was main celebrant and homilist. A reception prepared by guild members followed in the church basement.

Fr. Zegeer's homily (based on the readings of the day: **Gn.** 12: 1-9; **Ps.** 33; **Mt.** 7:1-5) follows here in its entirety.



Praised be  
the Most  
Sacred Heart  
of Christ on  
this the  
spiritual  
birthday of  
Julia  
Greeley!  
Most Sacred  
Heart of  
Jesus, have  
mercy on us!



The Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk." It was an act of faith. He was leaving all that he knew, all that was familiar to him.

In a similar way, Julia Greeley did the same thing. Born into slavery in Hannibal, Missouri, slavery was all she knew – the horrors and the ravages that had plagued on her dignity and those she loved. She was, even as a child, I would think, very spirited and firm in recognizing the wrong and the right. And getting in the way of her slave owners beating her mother, she would lose the sight of her right eye for the rest of her life – disfiguring her face. She would continue to suffer from the verbal assaults of people recognizing her disfigurement. Even those who loved her, would later on in life, refer to her as "Ugly Julia."



Her brothers and sisters had plenty a “splinter in their eye.” She experienced it not only in living the horrors of slavery, but even coming here to Denver and even in this very church experiencing racist tendencies, comments, or objections toward her presence here by fellow parishioners. The splinters in the eyes of her brothers and sisters in Christ were very visible and evident in the people who refused her

generosity simply because she was a free black slave woman, and they were white and needed her help. They preferred hunger and cold to her assistance.

The splinters in their eyes were very evident and clear, and Julia Greeley could have easily pointed them out. But she knew that actions spoke louder than words. When she couldn’t speak up as a little girl, she stood between the whip of her slave master and her mother. Actions speak louder than words.

The Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and your father’s house to the land I will show you.” In God’s providence, Julia ended up

here in Denver. It wasn’t the promised land. And it wasn’t an easy life. She would never marry and would never have children, as you know.

But maybe in seeing that very crucifix on the wall, just slightly modified from its damage several decades ago and restored, she saw the similarity with that man nailed to the cross and the scourges of the whip on his back, the beating upon his face, the blood running down his cheeks. “He was a slave like me, and yet they honored him.”

Maybe in Christ crucified, Julia saw a kinsman, someone she could relate to and identify with. Unjustly imprisoned, falsely accused, and condemned to death, his



sacrifice would redeem the world. Maybe it helped her to make sense of her own suffering, not only in slavery, because of which she could not

even know her own birthday or because of the ravages it would play on her parents whose names she wasn’t certain of.

Whatever she saw in that very crucifix hanging on the wall, in a slightly different location than it is today, and because of the welcoming spirit and hospitality of the great



Jesuit missionaries that founded this parish, Julia found a home.

We're here on the 143rd anniversary of her spiritual birth in the only building that was her home for a lifetime. In her poverty she rented and moved from room to room, from building to building, all over Denver. She was rarely anywhere living more than 14, 15 or 16 years.

But here at Sacred Heart from 1880, when she was baptized, June 26, until the day of her death in 1918, this was always her home.

The Jesuits offered her breakfast frequently, but she would turn it down. "All I need is Jesus in the Eucharist, Father." Except for the days that she knew her charitable works would exhaust her physically, ravaged as she was by the effects of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, throughout her body; only then would she occasionally have a full meal. But her meal each morning and her sustenance both physically, spiritually and emotionally was Mass here at Sacred Heart, in this very building, looking at these same images above me of St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius Loyola, the exact same paintings here when she was baptized, when she came into the Church. She looked at these images, the statue of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, the great Jesuit saint and model of purity, and surely prayed for her own purity. Unmarried without children, there must have had moments of great holiness. But in the heart of Christ she found such a consolation and a dignity, that she was willing to leave everything behind to follow Him.

Leaving behind Missouri and making Denver her home, she was only one person and yet she made a lasting impact by her efforts that we continue to

celebrate today, and that the world will know. We may be a bit discouraged with how many people are here – 20 or so – but it only took one woman with no education, no family, no home to call her own, permanently, to make a lasting impact on the firemen and the faithful here in Denver. And even though she experienced racism and rejection, and even though it was a dangerous thing to go about the city as a black woman in Denver at night alone, she would not be deterred. She gave to those who were racist, she loved those who were not Catholic. She shared the devotion to the Sacred Heart whether people believed in it or not, not because they were Catholic, but because she was.

"Stop judging that you may not be judged. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you." I wonder if Julia heard these words as she went to Mass every day. She must have and thought, "I'm being generous to them, not because they deserve it, but because that is how I want God to be towards me." "The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you." Julia must have been convinced that all that Christ has done for us is not because we've earned it or because we deserve it, but simply because he is the literal embodiment of love personified.

And if that's how God is, Julia knew that's how she must be. I'm his daughter now. Jesus is my brother. Sacred Heart is my home, and the members of the family of the parish are my family, and those kids across the street at Sacred Heart school are my

children. And the children I care for, from the meager pay that I am receiving, are my children too. I don't need to marry. I can leave Missouri behind,



Photos courtesy of Jean Torkelson, Julia Greeley Home

because in faith through Christ, I have found a family and I have found a home. And her family was not perfect. Just like ours, they had many splinters in their eyes. Just as they do and we do.

But what she focused on was not only the beam in hers – as she would ask for forgiveness each day at Mass as we did in the penitential rite –but above all the beam she most noticed was that on which Christ is crucified – the beam that is horizontal that reminds us that we are interconnected with one another, and the beam that is vertical that reminds us that we are inseparable from God. It is both love of God and love of neighbor that is the summary of the commandments according to Christ, and it was the summary and the embodiment of her life in Christ here in Denver.

Julia Greeley could see clearly with eyes of faith in spite of the horrors she experienced as a child, the horrors as an adult through the experiences of racism. She would not live out of the wounds that others caused her, nor would she react to the wounds that drove them to hatred and animosity, and slavery and racism and discrimination. She would live, rather, hidden in the wounds of Christ and his pierced heart. There she found consolation. There she found the water flowing from his side, to satiate her thirst for love, for life, for hope, and for salvation. There in His blood, she found forgiveness for her own sins mingled with the blood she spilled as a slave and that of her mother and father, and those she knew and loved, those she left behind still struggling with slavery and the injustices that continue to this day.

“The blood of the martyrs in the seed of the church,” Tertullian tells us. And the seed that Julia has planted by her blood, sweat, and tears throughout the city on foot have borne the seeds of faith among you and me and among many others throughout the

world. As our Guild grows and as devotion to her grows, today we pray on her spiritual birthday that God will grant us the miracle we need for her beatification. And that as we celebrate here in her home and eat in the kitchen where she cooked and cleaned and worked, as we pray and sit in the very pews where she sat – these pews are original to the church – so we sit alongside her, and we ask Julia to help us not live a life in reaction to the brokenness of others or trapped in our own brokenness, but to live a life after Christ as she did, not because they are Catholic, but because we are

## **Vintage YouTube ♥**

A video was found recently on YouTube which Historic Denver made of its livestreamed interview with Fr. Blaine on Feb. 9, 2022, when it decided to make Julia’s boarding house one of its 50 new golden jubilee sites of historical interest. “Empowered by Place: Julia Greeley’s Denver,” can be accessed at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMk22n\\_YXdE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMk22n_YXdE) It also discusses the situation of domestic workers at Julia’s time in Denver.



## **Julia’s Canoe Masses ♥**

Intentions placed in Julia’s Canoe, either by email or other forms of submission, are listed in a digital file constantly updated. In conjunction with the Guild, the Cathedral Basilica celebrates monthly Masses for all in Julia’s Canoe.

These are on the First Fridays of the month. A member of the Guild leads a prayer for Julia's intercession and the Litany of the Sacred Heart after the Mass near Julia's tomb in the Sacred Heart Chapel. Upcoming Masses will be on:

**Fri., Aug. 4, 5:30 p.m.**

**Fri., Sept. 1, 5:30 p.m.**

Place yourself and your intentions in Julia's Canoe at [juliascanoe@gmail.com](mailto:juliascanoe@gmail.com).

## Appendix ♥

**Bishop Jorge Rodriguez' Homily**  
for the Annual Julia Greeley Mass, June 7, 2023,  
Basilica Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception,  
Denver CO

Catholic News Agency wrote a couple of days ago: *"Hundreds of pilgrims have descended on a Benedictine monastery of religious sisters in rural Missouri in recent days after news began to spread on social media last week that the recently exhumed remains of the contemplative order's African American foundress appear to be incorrupt, four years after her death and burial in a simple wooden coffin."*

The article was speaking of Sister Wilhelmina Lancaster, founder of the Benedictine Sisters of Mary, Queen of the Apostles. It concluded: *"According to Catholic tradition, incorruptible saints give witness to the truth of the resurrection of the body and the life that is to come. The lack of decay is also seen as a sign of holiness: a life of grace lived so closely to Christ that sin with its corruption does not proceed in typical fashion but is miraculously held at bay."*

We know that we all are called to be saints. Canonized Saints are persons in

Heaven, who lived heroically virtuous lives and are worthy of imitation.

In official Church procedures, there are several steps to sainthood. Our sister, Servant of God, Julia Greeley, whose mortal remains lay here at this Cathedral, is already moving in this procedure towards sainthood. And we are here to pray for this grace to happen.

On June 7, 1918, at the feast of the Sacred Heart, Julia died in Denver. Julia was laid in state in her Franciscan habit and buried from Sacred Heart Church. And the Church, especially our Church in Denver, prays and expects for God's providential time to bring her to the altars, to continue being an inspiration and model of the true "angels of charity" we are called to be.

The reading today, from the book of Tobit<sup>1</sup> today offers two great examples of prayer. One by Tobit, and the other one by Sarah. Both are suffering great pain in their lives: Tobit because of his blindness, and Sarah for her barrenness. Their prayer begins, not with asking, but by praising and thanking.

*"Grief-stricken in spirit, I, Tobit, groaned and wept aloud. Then with sobs, I began to pray: 'You are righteous, O Lord, and all your deeds are just; All your ways are mercy and truth; you are the judge of the world'."*

And Sarah: *"At that time, then, she spread out her hands, and facing the window, poured out her prayer: 'Blessed are you, O Lord, merciful God, and blessed is your holy and honorable name. Blessed are you in all your works forever'!"*

Tobit's great sadness for his blindness, and Sarah's pain for her humiliating barrenness, are not an impediment for them to acknowledge God's righteousness, mercy, justice, truth, and holiness. In their prayer they never blame, complain or recriminate God for what they were going through.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tobit 3: 1-2, 6, 10-11, 16-17)

Nevertheless, their pain is great, and they don't hesitate to express it before God. Tobit suffers to the point of wishing to die: *"Lord, command my life breath to be taken from me, that I may go from the face of the earth into dust. It is better for me to die than to live... I am overwhelmed with grief."*



Sarah's unbearable distress gets to the extreme of thinking about killing herself, and she didn't do it, thinking about her father:

"The girl was deeply saddened that day, and she went into an upper chamber of her house, where she planned to hang herself.

"But she reconsidered, saying to herself: 'No! People would level this insult against my father: You had only one beloved daughter, but she hanged herself because of ill fortune!'"

Because of their trust and confidence in God's righteousness, mercy, and wisdom, their prayer was heard: *"At that very time, the prayer of these two suppliant was heard in the glorious presence of Almighty God. So, Raphael was sent to heal them both: to remove cataracts from Tobit's eyes, and to drive the wicked demon Asmodeus from Sarah."*

I would love to know how Julia prayed. Humanly speaking her life was one of humiliation, poverty, and suffering. Slavery, losing an eye in a violent way and marking her face for the rest of her life; a life of servitude, always in the last place,

she was always "the Help."

I read that Julia went to see someone and then she referred: *"She was good to me."* *"She told me that I would be white in heaven."*

Those words struck me because they express what people of color had to go through, but not in Julia's heart. "She was good to me," she said. She only knew and prayed to the God of love. In her heart there was no place for complaints, reproach, or blame.

We know that she liked to spend time in Church to pray. That she had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Blessed Virgin, and to the Eucharist. We also know that her heart was occupied by the poor, children, firefighters. For sure her prayers were filled with them.

As with Tobit, Sarah, and Julia, the right way to pray is with a trusting heart in God's love, and with a loving heart for others. A prayer resenting of grumbling, grievance, and sadness, hardly can reach God's ears, until that heart is healed.

I read that Julia was blinded in her right eye while her mother was being whipped and the weapon caught the side of her face, Julia was not beautiful physically, but because of the beautiful heart she had, all her prayers, coming from such a forgiving and loving soul, then and today, "are heard in the glorious presence of Almighty God."

## **Guild Contacts ♥**

### **Julia Greeley Guild**

c/o Cathedral Basilica

1535 N. Logan St.

Denver CO 80203-1913

[juliagreeleyguild@gmail.com](mailto:juliagreeleyguild@gmail.com)

(303) 558-6685

[www.juliagreeley.org](http://www.juliagreeley.org)

## Welcome to Our Meetings ♥

All Guild Members and other Friends of Julia are welcome at our planning meetings. We meet by ZOOM every Third Thursday of the month at 10:30 a.m. MT. The coming meetings in 2023 will be on Sept. 21, Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Dec. 21. If you have not previously been to a meeting, you will need to contact us at 720-352-4995 to obtain the meeting ID number and password.

## Paid Memberships ♥

Help us build our **paid** membership by joining the **Julia Greeley Guild** and inviting others to join. A membership application form can be found and printed at our web site, <http://www.juliagreeley.org/guild.html>  
**Dues are \$20 a year or \$50 for three.**

## Our Officers ♥

Mary Leisring, President & Treasurer  
Dustin Caldwell, Vice President  
Kevin Knight, Secretary  
Fr. Sam Morehead, Pastor  
Fr. John James Arcidiacono, C.J.S., Guild  
Liaison to the Cathedral Staff  
Fr. Blaine Burkey, O.F.M.Cap., Consultant

## Honorary Life Members ♥

*honored while with us*

Fr. Marcus Medrano  
Mary Frances O'Sullivan  
Sr. Mary Prudence Allen, R.S.M.  
Fr. Gene Emrisek, O.F.M.Cap.  
Linda Marie Skidmore Chase

## Guild Forebearers ♥

*honored posthumously*

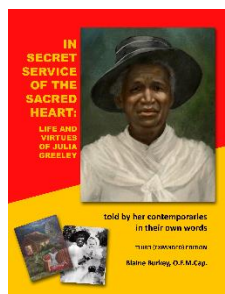
Msgr. Matthew Smith  
Agnes Rooney Urquhart  
Marjorie Ann Urquhart Simpson  
Fr. Eugene Murphy, S.J.  
Eleanor Pavella Castellan  
Theodora O'Donnell Arnold  
Fr. Pacificus Kennedy, O.F.M.



## Greeley Guild Galleria

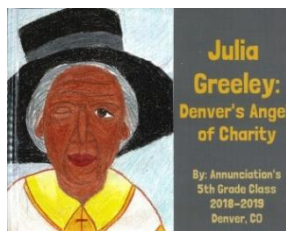
The Guild has a number of items available for purchase at its office at the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, 1525 N. Logan St., Denver CO 80203-1913. A check made out to "Cathedral Basilica" in the amount of the price of the item(s) wanted and the name and address, phone number, and email address of the purchaser should be accompanied by the item number and number of copies desired. Domestic shipping and sales tax will be paid for by the Guild. Quantity discounts and foreign shipping should be discussed ahead of time with the Guild at 720-352-4995.

Unless told otherwise, the Guild will subscribe free of charge all purchasers to *Julia's Lil Red Wagon*, the Guild's free newsletter you have in hand.



**Item JG-14 -- In Secret Service of the Sacred Heart: Remembering the Life and Virtues of Julia Greeley, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 168-page book by Fr. Blaine Burkey, O.F.M.Cap., bringing**

together everything of significance about Julia published between 1918 and 2021. -- \$22.00 a copy.



**Item JG-12 -- Julia Greeley: Denver's Angel of Charity, a full-color childrens-illustrated 17-page book, produced by Annunciation grade**

school's fifth-grade class, now in its second printing. -- \$15.00 a copy.



**Item JG-13 -- An Hour with Julia Greeley, a 24-page pamphlet by Fr. Blaine Burkey, O.F.M.Cap., provides an excellent brief and accessible overview of Julia's life and witness. -- \$2.00 a copy**

