

# Lil' Red Wagon

of the Servant of God Julia Greeley



official newsletter of  
**The Julia Greeley Guild**  
a ministry of  
Sacred Heart Catholic Church  
Denver, Colorado

**Forty-fifth Issue 3-3-2025**  
**St. Katherine Drexel edition**

## Annual Bus Pilgrimage Returns to Lent, April 12; Seats Still Available ♥

Fr. Blaine is preparing to celebrate another Julia Greeley Lenten bus pilgrimage on April 17, the day before Palm Sunday. As in the past, it will begin 10 a.m. at the Capuchin provincial office at 3613 Wyandot St. and briefly visit some 19 sites connected with Julia's story, spending larger periods of time at Julia's Boarding House, Sacred Heart Church and Immaculate Conception Cathedral-Basilica. Tickets for seats on the bus are limited and already being sold for \$115 at <https://cpma.ejoinme.org/2025juliagreeley>

## Guild Back Where Started ♥

Since the last issue of *Julia's Lil Red Wagon*, the Julia Greeley Guild has moved its center of operations back to its place of origin in Julia's neighborhood at Sacred Heart Parish on Larimer St. The move happened over a period of weeks, but its official date was Oct. 4, 2024.

The move brings several of our core members back to where they first entered the church, and it gives all of us a more easily reached office space, with the possibility of having in person meetings. Our new pastoral leader is Fr. Eric Zegeer, who also teaches homiletics at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary.

## The 2025 Holy Year



## Julia Greeley & the Hope That Doesn't Disappoint ♥

by Clare Kneusel-Nowak



**This is the year of hope.**

The Catechism calls hope "the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of Heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 1817).

As a Colorado Catholic, the most immediate figure that comes to mind when I read this is Denver's own Servant of God, Julia Greeley. What besides a radical fixation on the Kingdom of Heaven could move someone who had every reason to hate to be an irresistible force of love? Who besides the Holy Spirit can give someone that kind of strength?

Born into slavery, Julia bore the wounds of its abuse her whole life. One of her eyes was so damaged by a beating as a child that it oozed fluid continually, and she had to carry a handkerchief to wipe it.

And yet, Julia devoted her life to serving others. Her entire life was so utterly focused on the things of Heaven that she lived in self-forgetful charity, loving God with her whole being and her neighbor as herself.

She would give alms. She served others devotedly. She even once donated \$30 of her own money — a small fortune for her — to help a small basement chapel where she attended Mass purchase a new organ. Her eyes were fixed on heaven.

On the one hand, Julia belonged to her day's lowest conceivable social rank: she was an uneducated, unmarried, Catholic, disabled, former slave woman with no family. On the other hand, even those who tried to slander her inadvertently assisted in documenting her sanctity.

Take, for instance, when the first Governor of the Colorado Territory, William Gilpin, divorced his wife and sued for parental rights of their children. He used his wife's friendship with Julia Greeley to discredit her in court, claiming Julia was a "lewd and unprincipled woman" who had destroyed all decency in their home. As a result, we have sworn legal testimonies that, far from accusing her character, roundly acclaim Julia's goodness and virtues.

## The Poor in Spirit

Julia was poor her whole life but was ready to give what little she had to the service of the poor and the Church, and beyond what she could give, she begged on behalf of others. Stories abound of Julia procuring clothes, toys, food — even a mattress — when she learned someone was in need.

Julia made little distinction between people's desires and necessities: she was as eager to beg for a bag of potatoes as she was for a pretty party dress for one of "her Cinderellas" to attend a parish dance. If Julia received torn clothes or broken toys, she took them home in her red wagon, repaired them and gave them away. What is more astonishing is that Julia gave these items to the poor in secret, usually at night, so that the white beneficiaries of her charity would not be ashamed to receive help from a Black woman.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says the poor in spirit inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. The great spiritual teachers have noted that those who are poor in spirit — those who hold what they have lightly, ready to give it away — are those who receive the great gifts that God wants to bestow on them.

As one of the "poor in spirit," Julia was undeniably heir to the Kingdom of Heaven. Transfigured by hope, even the streets of Denver — from Sacred Heart Parish through Five Points to the firehouses — for Julia were the gilded streets of Heaven.

## Joy & Beauty Contests

How do you recognize hope alive in a soul? One way, I think, is the testament of joy. Real joy, after all, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The soul animated by hope is daily looking to and, indeed, living *in* the Triune God. Joy, therefore, is the proper response to the good things that God has promised for those who love him.

Julia's joy was especially clear in her particularly delicious sense of humor.

There was an occasion when Julia's parish, Sacred Heart, was having a fundraiser. Some girls in the congregation thought up the idea of making it a beauty contest: votes would be cast by monetary donation. Whichever girl raised the most would be declared the beauty queen.

Julia decided to compete. At that point, she was an old woman, bent by arthritis, with an oozing eye and adorned in worn-out rags. She did not seem a strong contender for the coveted prize.

However, Julia intended to win because it was the funny thing to do.

She was already a regular visitor to every firehouse in Denver, where she delivered pamphlets on the Sacred Heart and collected goods to bring to the poor. So, Julia went to the local firehouses and told the men about the contest. She ended up earning more votes and raising more money than everyone else and was crowned the parish's Beauty Queen.

### The Goal of Hope

When she died on the feast of the Sacred Heart in 1918, Julia became the first layperson to lie "in state" in a Catholic Church. Without ease of communication or any written notice, all of Denver learned their Angel of Charity had died. For five hours, people passed through Loyola Chapel to pay their last respects: the rich in their limousines, the poor on foot, White folks and Black folks, religious and laity. Groups of people who had nothing in common except Julia's charity.

Julia was born into slavery, but she became the first person entombed at the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver.

Julia's childhood was nightmarish, but priests who knew her well "declared her the

most saintly character they had ever met" (*Denver Catholic Register*, 1922).

Julia had a bad eye, but people who knew her had trouble remembering which eye it was. They recalled most strongly how her face always glowed.

Julia lived in secret charity but God, who sees what is secret, has given her back to us as a model of virtue, perhaps especially of hope.

(reprinted from *The Denver Catholic* 3 mar. 2025).

### Julia's Sole Writing ♥

It's been said many times that Julia Greeley never wrote anything. While he was still the guardian of Julia's remains at the Basilica Cathedral, Fr. Ron Cattany had another thought on that.



He didn't really contradict the statement, but he made it graphically and emotionally much stronger.

In a recently discovered video, produced by RomeReport.com, we hear him saying the only thing that Julia Greeley ever wrote, was "X," which appears on her posthumously-discovered last will and testament.

X speaks so loudly because it proclaims that her slavery was the reason she never wrote anything else.

Thank you, Father, for your insight.

See the RomeReport.com video itself at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTh4hDDxsXE>

### Julia Greeley's life inspires Colorado Springs Legates ♥

by David Uebbing

In early February I had the privilege of telling around 30 members of the Colorado Springs chapter of Legatus about the beautiful life and witness of the Servant of God Julia Greeley.



**Legatus members dining at the El Paso Club**  
**Courtesy: Dave Uebbing**

Many of them hadn't heard about Julia before and were surprised to learn that she was a cook not too far away from where we were gathered that evening.

The evening fittingly began with a Rosary and Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral, followed by dinner and my presentation at the El Paso Club in downtown Colorado Springs.

The presentation covered what I had learned as Julia's Vice Postulator, from her humble birth into slavery to the current state of her Cause for Canonization. The attendees remarked that they were struck by Julia's deep humility and the fact that she had walked the streets and traveled through areas with which they were familiar.

I was most deeply impressed by a mother who approached me after the presentation and said that she would be asking for Julia's intercession for her son and his wife, who have struggled for years with infertility. The clear connection was the story of Julia behind the only photo we have of Julia.



**Julia with Marjorie Uruqhart in McDonough Park on Federal Blvd. in April 1916.**

As the story goes, Julia was walking down the street on the west side of Denver when Agnes Uruqhart asked her if she washed floors. Julia said she did and was invited into her house. Julia saw a picture of

the Sacred Heart and other sacred images on the wall and asked if she was Catholic. When Agnes replied that she was, Julia asked where all the kids were.

Sadly, Agnes shared that they had a son, but that he had died 13 years ago and that she and her husband hadn't been able to conceive since then. Rather than be embarrassed about touching on a painful topic, Julia reassured Agnes, don't worry, "there will be a little white angel running around this house. I will pray and you'll see."

The baby girl who was born a year later, Marjorie Uruqhart, is the little girl we see in the photo of Julia.

I left the gathering encouraged by the faith that Julia's life and witness generated and hopeful that we will soon see her heroic virtue recognized by the Pope.

## Standing on Holy Ground at Woodland, Brush Creek, Quincy♥



**Sr. Marion (4<sup>th</sup> from l.) and other pilgrims on Julia's Caldwell farm site at Woodland MO. Photo courtesy of Michael Maher.**

by Sister Marion Weinzapfel, C.S.J.  
 On Saturday, May 18, 2024, twelve Sisters and C.S.J. Associates from St. Louis traveled to the area around Brush Creek and Hannibal MO and

Quincy IL to visit ground made holy by the presence of Venerable Augustus Tolton and Servant of God Julia Greeley.

These two candidates for sainthood lived in close proximity and time at the beginning of their lives: Fr. Tolton lived 1854-1897 and Julia was born sometime between 1833 and 1843 and died in 1918.

Our guide, Michael Maher from St. Louis ([www.stchristophersjourneys.com](http://www.stchristophersjourneys.com)) had arranged to have Fr. Joe Zimmerman O.F.M., historian of Fr. Tolton and in residence at Quincy University, meet and travel with us.

**St. Peter's Chapel.** Our first stop was at Brush Creek where Venerable Fr. Augustus Tolton had been baptized. We prayed in the chapel and visited the slave cemetery where 50 years ago, parishioners knowing that enslaved people were buried there erected cement crosses with either no name or "Unknown" printed on them. These parishioners engaged a water witch or dowser to find the graves. I give thanks for this community who acknowledged the truth of their past.

**Julia Greeley.** A short 9 miles from St. Peter's brought us to Watter's Salvage--thought of Frankie Rachell-Bruce with all the John Deere tractors sitting everywhere. Thanks to Fr. Blaine Burkey, O.F.M.Cap, Michael Maher had contact information and obtained permission for the caravan to stop and step out on the land.

We read from the Gospel of Matthew and It was my privilege to tell Julia's story. We concluded with her prayer. Standing on the land and looking at the sky, I gave God thanks for her beautiful life and for all who promote her cause.

We prayed that she might soon become a saint.

**The Huck Finn Freedom Center, Hannibal.** Here we enjoyed Faye Dant, the Executive Director, speaking about the Black character, Jim (James in Percival Everett's new book) in the story of Huck Finn. Huck's character was based on Daniel Quarles, an enslaved person on his uncle's farm. We learned a lot from Ms. Dant and the excellent displays in the small museum. the Freedom Center.

**The Mark Twain Boyhood Home Museum** told the story of Samuel Clemens and his impact. Displays and a great video were very helpful. We enjoyed box lunches at a nearby picnic ground from a new St. Louis coffee shop, The Drip, that were equal to their breakfast sandwiches enjoyed hours earlier at our gathering spot.

### **Fr. Augustus Tolton and Quincy, IL**

We crossed the river over which Augustus and his two siblings were carried by his mother to freedom in Illinois. He attended St. Boniface, and because of prejudice, changed to St. Peter's School. We drove by both of these church sites.

Stops here included The Historical Society of Quincy Museum, the Quincy Underground Railroad Museum, Quincy University where Fr. Tolton attended some classes and his grave in the priest's lot at St. Peter's cemetery.



A side altar in Quincy University dedicated to Fr. Tolton is very beautiful. Do read the story of Fr. Augustus Tolton and appreciate his courage in the face of constant prejudice that he endured as a young man and even as a priest. He left Quincy for an assignment in Chicago, feeling that he had been a failure. Yet, as the first acknowledged African-American priest, he is revered in our time as a man of courage and deep faith. He was recognized in his own day by the National Black Catholic Congresses.

## **Favor Received ♥**

In mid-November, my blood work for my annual physical came back showing my blood sugars were literally off the charts.

My A1C in particular was particularly problematic, results were 11.7.

Dec. 2, I had a follow-up appointment with my doctor. I had been asking Julia Greeley to intercede for me. They did another blood draw in the office and my A1C number was back to normal.

Additionally, my BP, which is usually high, was lower than it has been in a decade. It was within the normal range. Thanks be to God and Julia Greeley's intercession. Peace and all Good.

--Ken M.

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## juliagreeley.org ♥

In conjunction with the move of the Guild's ministry and headquarters from the Cathedral Basilica to Sacred Heart Church, Fr. Blaine Burkey and his Capuchin confrere Fr. Joseph Mary Elder reformed and updated the website at [www.juliagreeley.org](http://www.juliagreeley.org)

The site is retitled **Julia Greeley: Servant of God** and clearly identified as the official website of both the Julia's Guild and her Cause for Canonization.

On the home page, four divisions of the site are given – About Julia, The Guild, The Cause, Julia's Intercession – with dropdown menus offering nine pages of information: Obituary / Julia, a Franciscan / Best Web Sites / The Julia Greeley Guild / The Book / Lil' Red Wagon / Julia's Intercession / Favors Received.

Julia, a Franciscan and Best Web Sites [10 recommend videos] are totally new pages, and the other seven are greatly updated.

And now, see for yourself.

## Presentations on Julia ♥

♥ Jared Mackey of [thesacredgrace.com](http://thesacredgrace.com) and MiDian Holmes from [betheepitome.org](http://betheepitome.org) interviewed Fr. Sam Morehead and Fr. Blaine about Servant of God Julia Greeley last June 6, for the fifth in a long series of podcasts which History of Christianity in our City will be making for the next decade.

The podcast has not yet appeared <https://www.historiescc.org/podcast>

♥ Fr. Blaine, Mary Leisring & Kate Springs presented a power point program to about 100 Knights and Dames of the northern lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem on Sept. 20. The Order responded, "*We are so grateful for your willingness to share the story of Julia Greeley to our Members. In addition to this being a wonderful blessing for Denver, it also serves as encouragement to all our members to strive for holiness. Julia Greeley was a remarkable woman!*"

♥ David Uebbing presented a power point program to about 50 members of the Colorado Springs Legatus on Feb. 6 which he describes earlier in this issue..

♥ Fr. Blaine, Mary Leisring & Kate Springs are scheduled to give a power point at Most Precious Blood Church, Denver, on Mar. 9

♥ Mary Leisring has another one scheduled at Nativity of Our Lord Church in Broomfield on Mar. 21.

## Guild Contacts ♥

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## Monthly Membership Forums ♥

All Guild Members and other Friends of Julia are welcome at our monthly membership forums, at which we exchange ideas and views on Julia and her cause for canonization. From Sept. to June, we meet by ZOOM every Third Thursday of the month at 10:30 a.m. MT. The coming meetings will be on Mar. 20, Apr. 17, May 15, and June 19. If you have not previously been

to one of these meetings, you will need to contact us at 720-773-1133 to obtain the meeting ID number and password for the ZOOM.

## **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.**

## **Board of Directors ♥**

David Uebbing, chair  
Kevin Knight, secretary  
Mary L. Leisring, treasurer  
Frankie Rachell-Bruce  
Fr. Eric Zegeer  
Fr. Blaine Burkey, O.F.M.Cap.

## **Staff ♥**

Mary L. Leisring, President  
Frankie Rachell-Bruce, Vice President  
Fr. Blaine Burkey, O.F.M.Cap., Wagon Editor  
Kevin Knight, Email Secretary

## **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.

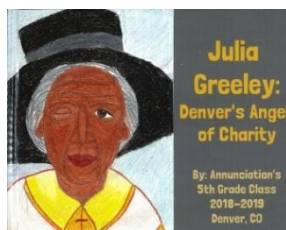


## **Julia Greeley Books**

The following books are available for purchase at our office at Sacred Heart Church, 2760 Larimer St., Denver CO 80205. A check made out to "Julia Greeley Guild" 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 [juliagreeleyguild@gmail.com](mailto:juliagreeleyguild@gmail.com). 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**

