

# Troubadour

A Greeting from Sr. Marcia Lunz

## Welcome to a New Year!

Last year we invited our readers to reflect on 'vision,' based on the year 2020 and our familiarity with 20/20 vision. Everyone wants to see clearly. The message ended:

"May God bless your efforts everyday as you pursue your vision, your dream. May your vision be clear to you and may you find loving support along the way."

As it turned out, 2020 proved to be, for most of us, the most challenging year of our lives. A pandemic uprooted life in unpredictable ways. While we continue to hope for a return to life as we knew it, as of now, it looks like accepting a 'new normal' is a more realistic possibility.

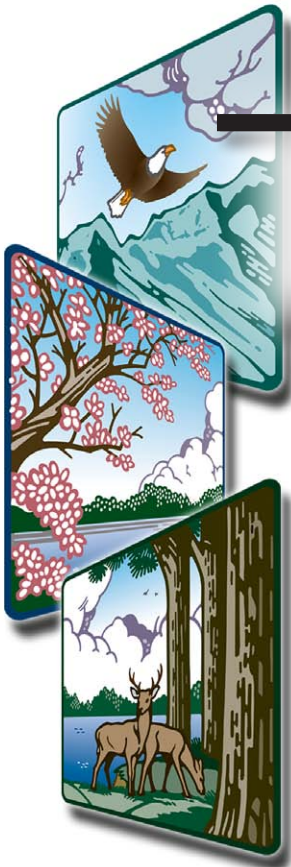
in-person encounters, and even life itself.

In situations where others depend on us, keeping a stiff upper lip is not a solution. Whether others depend on us, or we are dependent on others, we all need a sense of hope, of possibility, a future.

Calendars lay out a year in front of us with order and precision, a blank canvas we color, day by day, with our life experiences. The burdens and blessings will fill in the days.

Through it all, may your vision and your hopes and dreams not get lost. May the lessons we learned in 2020 about adapting, changing, accepting, and thriving serve to motivate us to make good decisions for ourselves and others.

May God bless you with all you need to face the challenges that are yours as well as to recognize the blessings in your life.



In hard times the losses in our lives loom large and heavy. There is nothing light-hearted about losing a job, benefits,





# Awesome!

This is heard so often when someone wants to express their delight about what they have just seen or heard or experienced. For example, sometimes we can find ourselves standing in awe at a sunset, a sleeping baby, a waterfall. What leads us to awe?

Gratitude is one source of awe. Toward the end of his life, St. Francis of Assisi wrote "The Canticle of the Creatures." In this 13th century poem, Francis talked of his relationship with all of God's creation in words of praise prompted by his grateful heart. He identified with every aspect of creation as brother or sister and was profoundly respectful of all of it. He was full of awe.

Five years ago in the 21st century, Pope Francis, who took his name after St. Francis of Assisi, wrote a circular letter, an encyclical titled *Laudato Si*. The title is taken from the first words of St. Francis' poem: *Praise be to you...*

Pope Francis' message is an invitation to regain the sense of awe of creation that St. Francis had. Our life is very different from the 13th century, but in no less need for living in relationship with all forms of God's creation.

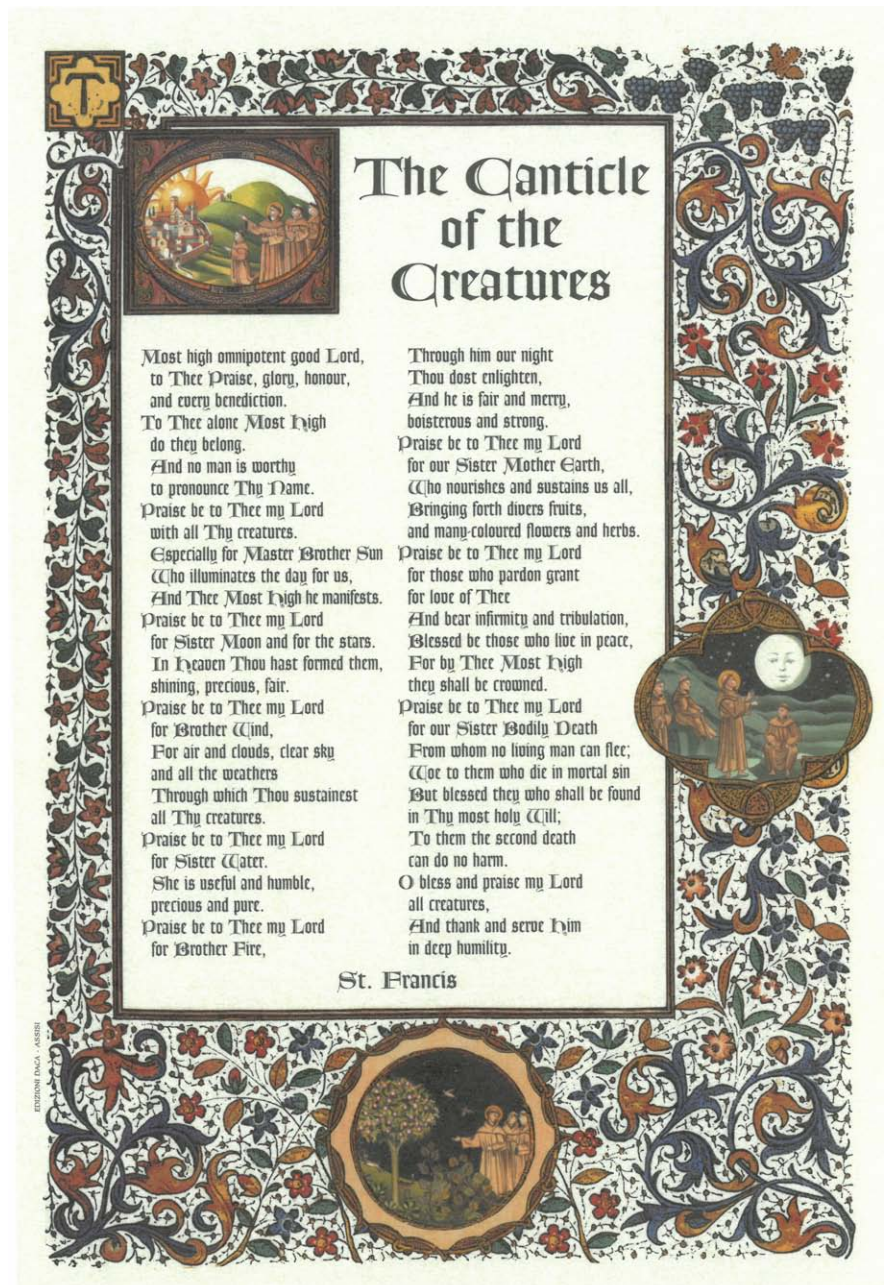
Mother Earth cannot be taken for granted and needs protection. Action flows from love. Love is rooted in relationship. Relationships are built out of respect and gratitude.

St. Francis said at the end of his life, "I have done what was mine to do. Now you must do what is yours to do." Both St. Francis and Pope Francis might urge us to let something in creation move us to awe

every day - gazing at a sunset over winter snow, a blossom in early spring, a flower garden in summer, or a tree in fall foliage are starting points.

That simple gesture can lead us to working for the good of all creation as we grow in awe of the worth and value of nature around us.

For the text of *Laudato Si*: [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)





# A Home for Francis

If you stroll through the sisters' front lawn, you come to the Grotto of St. Francis of Assisi. It is at this beloved grotto that our Annual Pet Blessing has taken place. It is also pictured in the Enrollment cards we send you. We thought you might be interested in reading how it came to be.

In the early 1930s, Mother Celestine Stark (†1944) worked diligently to beautify the convent grounds. After visiting a Franciscan shrine in Burlington, Wisconsin, the sisters came to her with the idea of having a Grotto of St. Francis built on the convent grounds. Mother Celestine agreed with them. When she brought it to her council, there was a difference of opinion as to where it should be placed.

At that time, the property south of the front lawn was used for raising crops and grazing. Sr. Bartholomew Frederick (†1981) and Sr. Esther Minch (†1979) thought the best place for the grotto would be on the northeast corner of the cornfield. Sr. Isabella

Thalmaier (†1954) suggested that the grotto should be placed next to the Agony Garden Grotto, allowing for more available land for expansion of St. Mary's Academy.

Sr. Bartholomew decided to talk to Jake Weninger, the head workman. She felt he could influence Sr. Isabella. Sure enough, it wasn't long before he began building the grotto in the northeast corner of the cornfield that bordered the front lawn. When it was finished, Jake invited the sisters to see it.

When Mother Celestine, Sr. Bartholomew, Sr. Esther, and Sr. Isabella came, "Looking at Sr. Bartholomew, Jake said, 'Didn't I do good work?' Sr. Bartholomew replied, 'Jake, you always do good work.'" *Assisi Archives: Grotto of St. Francis File*

Now, some 90 years later, Francis still looks out lovingly at all of God's creatures and welcomes the sisters and visitors who come to reflect and pray.

## 2020 Pet Blessing

Like so many things in our lives that have needed to be adapted because of COVID-19, our annual Pet Blessing was no exception. It took place on September 29 at the Grotto of St. Francis. It seemed strange not having our neighbors and friends along with their precious pets to join us.

The one thing that remained the same was remembering your beloved pets during the blessing. A special basket, which held the pets' names you sent to us, was given a place of honor at the grotto. Fr. Scott Walenfels, SDS, led a few members of the fund development team in prayer, asking God to bless your pets with good health and protection from all harm.

There are many tales of Francis' affection for animals and their trust in him. It is appropriate that St. Francis witnessed the blessing of these special companions that bring so much joy to so many of you.





# Seasonal Miracles in the Urban Forest

Forests are places filled with miracles. Forests hold an ongoing story of life evolving in our midst. Each day this story is unfolding in the urban forest at St. Francis Convent. It is a place of wonder as each season evolves.

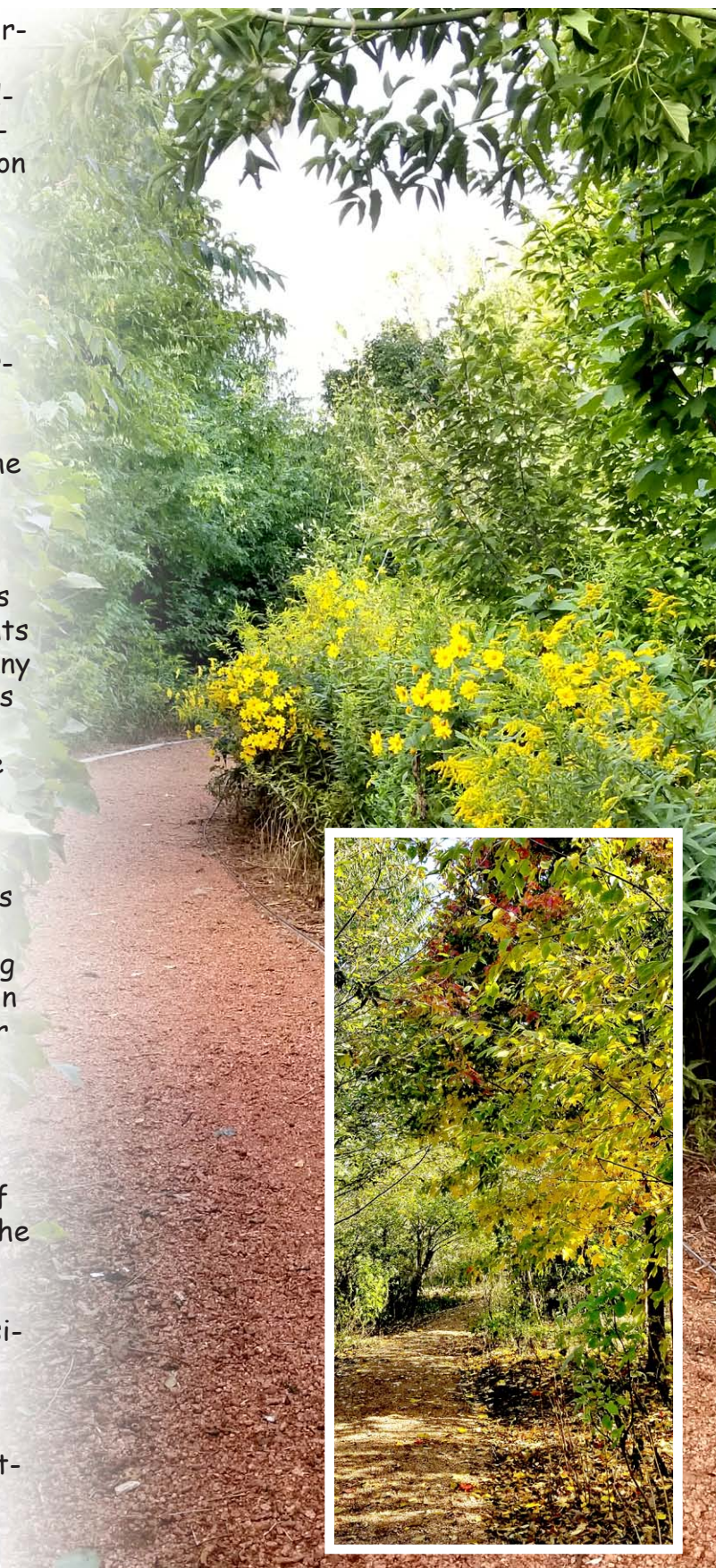
The spring forest brings its gifts of new life budding forth in the trees and on the forest floor. Multiple songs fill the air as birds migrate to their summer homes. Parents come with their children to look for caterpillars. Upon finding one, it is taken home in a jar to observe the miracle of the lifecycle of a monarch butterfly.

A summer forest welcomes visitors with its thick foliage, offering coolness with its shade. In the canopy overhead, bird parents feed their young and protect them from any danger. Yellow flowers line the pathways as purple and white flowers grace the forest floor. Rabbits, squirrels and birds lead the way as visitors walk the pathways.

The fall forest paints itself in yellows, reds and oranges as it transforms and lets go of the green of summer. Fallen leaves carpet the pathways giving off a crunching sound as one strolls through. It is a season of harvest as little gray squirrels scamper through the forest searching for goodies for their winter larders.

The winter forest, with its barren landscape, fills one with awe as it covers itself in coats of white. A quiet fills the air as the forest rests in the icy cold. Winter birds weather the cold in the branches with feathers fluffed to keep warm. Animal visitors can be detected by their footprints imprinted in the snow.

No matter where we live, forests are inviting us to experience their beauty and life stories. Take the time to wonder at this miracle of God's creation!





# Pet Interviews

There are a lot of accounts from pet owners describing how much their pets have meant to them during the pandemic. Our roving reporters decided to get the reaction from pets' viewpoints. Here are four interviews.

**I am Willy, a 12-year-old miniature schnauzer** (pictured here). In August, my owner and I moved to a condo along Lake Michigan. As it got closer to moving day, I could sense he was concerned how I would take to our new home. I immediately fell in love with it, especially the balcony. It is a wonderful place to snooze in the sun. Each day we take walks along the lake and enjoy its beauty. I do miss walking on the convent grounds and receiving loving attention from the sisters. Walks before COVID always involved stopping to talk to those we met. Now it seems they're afraid to get close to us. Since my owner has greatly reduced his interactions with others, my companionship has become more important than ever. My unconditional love reassures him and fills the void he is feeling. That is what a faithful companion does for someone he loves.



**Okay, folks, I am Mikey, a 2.5-year-old tabby cat.** People think of me as joyful and playful. Could be, except when I am not. It's all right when I get lots of cuddles and treats and get to lap-sit. But something's going on because there is more of that these days. And since I am up at night, I am not getting my regular daytime sleep. So I plead guilty to being more cranky at times and needing more attitude adjustment in addition to when the moon is full. That's always a HOOT! Why is it we didn't go to the Pet Blessing this year, but the dreaded vet visits were like clock work? My pet carrier has become a paddy wagon dragging me off to torture. Poke here, pinch there.



No concern for my sensitivity! Just let me sit in the window and watch birds and squirrels. I don't suppose I could go out to play with them?

**I am Angel, a golden retriever,** who has more questions than answers these days. This COVID time has set me thinking about so much. What's happened to Mama that she's going gaga over me and loves me sooo much that she's quit going out! Please. . . I need some time alone! Did she do something wrong that she has to wear that muzzle? And what's the deal with all this fresh air? Really. . . another walk? Does she have to give me a trim and a bath - I want my groomer. We don't have company anymore and I want to party. I want my family!!!!!! Whatever are we going to do for the Holidays??? Do you have any answers?

**My name is Sunny** (below). Since March, I have noticed strange things happening in my home. My owner hardly goes anywhere, putting a crimp in my daily routines. Her friend rarely comes to visit. I miss not playing with her jacket ties. Boxes are being brought down from the attic and cleaned out. I offer my services hoping to find a new play thing. The whirr of the sewing machine is heard as she sews masks for herself. I can't resist playing with the thread. The scariest thing was the day when a masked man came into the house. I thought we were being robbed. I quickly scooted under the bed only to find out he was the plumber. I have noticed my owner seems to be under more stress.

"Dr. Sunny" comes to the rescue! There is nothing like a loving cat cuddled up on one's lap to chase the stress away.

# Franciscan Cards & 2021 Calendar



Watch your mailbox for our new All Occasion cards being mailed this spring.

If you would like to order cards or our 2021 calendar (pictured on Page 1), please send an email request to: [srmarcia@lakeosfs.org](mailto:srmarcia@lakeosfs.org).

Find and order the sisters' handmade craft items at: [poverellocreations.org](http://poverellocreations.org)

← Y209142-SSF-TY  
With sincere appreciation



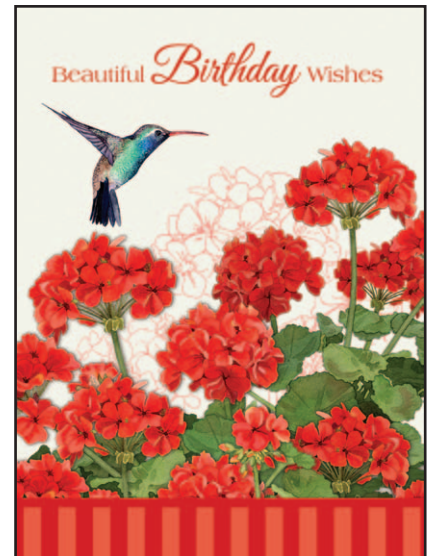
**Y208320-SSF-PBDAY**  
Hoping your day will be as special as you are.



**Y200828-SSF-TOY**  
Blank inside



**Y202505-SSF-SYM**  
May you find peace in loving memories.



**Y201201-SSF-FBDAY**  
May your day be one to remember, and your year be one to enjoy.

As Franciscan women who have a commitment to caring for all of creation, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi use environmentally friendly or post-consumer paper and soy ink whenever possible.



**Pet Medal Available for Donations of \$25 or more.**  
Brushed gold. Loop to attach to a collar.  
Pet name can be engraved on back.

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