

Troubadour

WINTER 2023 VOLUME 24 NO.1

A Greeting from Sister Mary Kemen

Welcome to 2023

With the coming of the new year, many people practice the familiar ritual of New Year's resolutions.

In keeping with the theme of our 2023 calendar - joining all creatures in praising God, our Creator - a good New Year's resolution might be, "I want to grow in a greater awareness and appreciation of the plants and animals that live on the earth with me." When we respect and care for Mother Earth and all of creation, we give praise to God.

St. Francis of Assisi delighted in the created world. For him, all of creation spoke of the love of God and God's presence with us. He came to realize everything that lives on the earth with us, are our brothers and sisters. He respected all with great reverence and dignity, whether it was washing the wounds of a leper or moving an earthworm from the road so travelers wouldn't step on it.

Francis spent time reflecting in nature and observing the beauty in all living things. He was totally present to animals, flowers, rock formations, and the people he met. These encounters led him to praise God, our Creator.

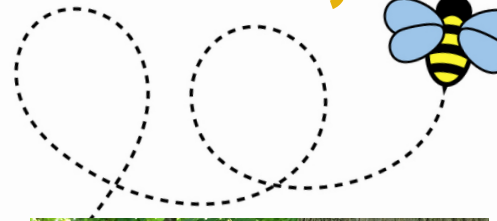
When we are more than physically present to the created world around us, something happens within us. When we slow down and are mindfully present, not having thoughts racing through our minds, we begin to hear the bird's song, the smell of the woods, we see nuance of color in flowers, and the dignity of the person before us. We come to realize our connectedness with all of creation.

Naturalist John Muir wrote: "Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of autumn."

Throughout this year, may you be blessed with delightful encounters with God's creation whether it be with the pets in your home, the plants in your garden, a walk in the woods, or a visit with another person.



Beekeeper Charlie Koenen is Subject of Documentary



Charlie Koenen, the celebrated local beekeeper who tends hives on the grounds of St. Francis Convent, was the center of attention in August as the subject of a documentary video about his work as a bee “evangelizer.” The video focuses on the impact of urban beekeeping on the environment and on Charlie’s unique message about the beauty and value of bees. The documentary was produced by Humm Productions out of Chicago Il. They specialize in social impact storytelling and produce a podcast as well as videos. The bee documentary will eventually be available on YouTube.

Charlie, who served in the past as Wisconsin’s



bee inspector and the beekeeper for Milwaukee County Parks, has worked with the Sisters for several years. He has his own business giving presentations to church, community, and school groups about the value of bees. A current interest of his is a certain type called a solitary bee that resides in smaller spaces than large hives. He installed a new hive for them on the grounds of the convent during the filming of the documentary.

Charlie’s message is aimed at making people think more about the unique and vital contribution of the honeybee. He links their selflessness, their communal lifestyle, and their value as pollinators for the environment, to faith, and the message of going about life more productively and in concert with one another and nature.

The next time you see a honey bee reflect for a moment on the honeybee’s profound contribution to the environment, and its subtle symbolism of community and work for the common good of all!

Did you know...



Honeybees can fly between 15-20 miles per hour.



A single worker bee produces about .083 teaspoon of honey.



A queen bee can lay more than 2,000 eggs a day.



A hive is a constant 93 degrees Fahrenheit year round



A worker bee may visit up to 2,000 flowers a day.

Source: www.thoughtco.com/fascinating-facts-about-honey-bees

Celebrating the Season of Creation

“I have heard their cry...I know their sufferings...Come, now! I will send you...I will be with you” Exodus 3:1-12.”

The burning bush was the symbol for the Season of Creation, September 1 to October 4, 2022. “The prevalence of unnatural fires is a sign of the devastating effects of climate change on the most vulnerable of our planet.

Creation cries out as forests crackle, animals flee, and people are forced to migrate due to the fires of injustice. In contrast, the fire that called to Moses as he tended the flock on Mt. Horeb did not consume or destroy the bush. This flame of the Spirit revealed God’s presence. This holy fire affirmed that God heard the cries of all who suffered and promised to be with us as we followed in faith to our deliverance from injustice.”

(excerpted from Season of Creation Celebration Guide 2022: Listen to the Voice of Creation)

Season of Creation began on September 1 with an opening

prayer service. The symbol for the season -- The Burning Bush -- was created by Larry Willkomm, liturgical environment coordinator at St. Francis Convent. The “flames” were the prayer petitions Sisters and Associates voiced at various events throughout the season. Activities throughout the month centered around caring for God’s Creation.

One of these activities during the Season of Creation drew eight Sisters to Mequon’s brimming restoration of trees, wetlands, prairies, and blooming trails on a gorgeous, warm summer morning. Sisters Rosalynn Dzikonski, Agnes Therese Eckelkamp, Rita Ann Haderer, Mary Hau, Jean Mariani, Helene Mertes, Charlotte Roost, and Lenore Steilen made the trip north of Milwaukee, Wis. to Mequon Nature Preserve on September 7, 2022. They were accompanied by Activity Director Kim Brewer, Larry Willkomm, and Justice and Peace Animators, Jill and Steven Haberman.



Some Sisters did a short hike around the water, while others boarded golf carts to tour a wider expanse. The staff at the nature preserve was welcoming and very informative about the re-creation of 510 acres. After a closing prayer service on a wooden bridge overlooking the pond, Sisters headed home, stopping for lunch at the home of Dr. Jerry and Marilyn Walker. Jerry was the dentist for the congregation from 1964-1975. Some of his former patients were along for the outing. On this day, truly God did “pitch a tent for the sun... nothing was deprived of its warmth.” (Ps.19)





Habitat Healers Treated to Garden Feast to Celebrate End of Season



It was a feast to remember as garden volunteers came together on September 23, 2022, for a year-end celebration and thank-you dinner prepared by Sisters Helene Mertes, Laverne Sommer, and Mary Lou Schramer. The setting was the hoophouse on the St. Francis Convent grounds and the spread featured the bounty of the garden – eggplant parmesan, scalloped potatoes, carrots and leeks, green beans with sesame seed and kickkoman sauce, swamp salad using tomatoes, cucumbers, red onions and green peppers, with vinaigrette dressing. The meal also included ham and was topped off with a selection of three desserts that included apple crisp, pumpkin roll, and plum kuchen.

The volunteers are known as Habitat Healers, a group that has been assisting in the gardens for over 10 years. Made up of 10-12 members, they are devoted gardeners who enjoy working with the Sisters to grow the vegetables and flowers that thrive on the convent grounds. Because of their volunteer service, we had another year of bountiful veggie production and beautiful flowers for all to enjoy!



What Happened to Sister Marcia Lunz?

Inquiring minds want to know what happened to Sister Marcia. After devoting 14 years of her life as a writer for our direct mail publications, Sister Marcia decided to retire from this role. We thank her for her many years of sharing the lives and ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi with all of you. We wish her all the best in retirement and know that she will enjoy having time to devote to her love of quilting. We welcome Sister Mary Kemen, whom Sister Marcia has been mentoring for three years, as our writer for donor communications.



Sister Marcia (left) with Sister Mary Kemen.

Blessing of Pets

On October 18, 2022, we gathered to have our annual pet blessing. We missed having our neighbors and friends' pets with us this year. It is our hope that they will be able to join us once again next year. Since it was a very windy day, we needed to have the blessing indoors. We found the perfect place. If you look closely at the picture, you will notice that St. Francis of Assisi has his hand in the position of giving a blessing. We said a prayer of blessing over all the pets whose names we had received from you. We thank God for the gift of our pets' companionship and unconditional love.



A Welcome Guest



Sister Rosa

Sisters Canise Kolbeck, Eileen Wendt, and Rosa Suazo of Clare Circle enjoyed time with Chloe during her weekly visit to the retired Sisters. Chloe, a Shih Tzu and Yorkshire Terrier mix, is accompanied by her owner, Associate Sharon Thyne. The two are a welcome sight as they stroll the halls of Clare Circle and Elizabeth Hall to meet and greet, bringing joy along the way!



Sister Canise



Sister Eileen

Benefits of Pet Therapy



“Pet therapy has been shown to have multiple benefits for residents in healthcare settings. Pet therapy can decrease: stress levels, blood pressure, pain, fatigue, anxiety, fear, isolation, and loneliness.

“Pet therapy has also been shown to improve energy levels, self-esteem, and mood, as well as decrease depression. Additional benefits include increased motor skills and movement, improved social skills and verbal communication, decreased boredom, and a more positive outlook. Pet therapy can promote social interaction and encourage exercise and playfulness.”

“The Benefits of Pet Therapy,” Amanda Perkins DNP, RN, Nursing Made Incredibly Easy, Jan./Feb. 2020, Volume 18, Issue 1, pp. 5-8.

Gardeners at Heart

In the book of Ecclesiastes from the Bible we read, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” This is so true with the position of garden manager at St. Francis Convent.

Sister Helene Mertes decided that it was time for her to ease up on the physical labor involved in tending the gardens at St. Francis Convent. Not quite ready to fully embrace the reality of retirement from her role as garden manager, she will stay connected to the gardens through the joy of growing seedlings each year and watching them grow and flourish.

“I would like to continue with the seedlings in the basement of St. Joseph House, preparing them for the growing season in the vegetable and flower gardens,” she said. “I can foresee growing enough for the grounds. And I plan to work a couple of mornings a week in the garden, assisting with harvesting, etc., as a volunteer.”

Sister Helene welcomed Sister Margaret Kruse in late May 2022, as the new garden manager and worked with her throughout the summer. Sister



Sister Margaret (left) and Sister Helene.

Margaret cares for all gardens, the urban forest and wetland needs, and supervises volunteers. Sister Margaret arrived at St. Francis Convent from Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat Center in Wheatland, Iowa. She grew up on a farm and knows her way around a garden. “It’s a lot to take in, but I’ve been enjoying it so far,” she said.

Sisters Helene and Margaret enjoyed talking about the bounty of the vegetable garden, which supplies the convent kitchen. They enthusiastically named all the veggies, herbs, and fruit that were harvested – green onions, lettuce, radishes, strawberries, onions, cilantro, parsley, turnips, spinach, green peppers,

cucumbers, beans, potatoes, squash, basil, eggplant, carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, kohlrabi, and beets.

Sister Helene will remain active in the planning of the new plantings around Convent Park and the restoration efforts for statuary and other features of the grounds. She will also continue managing the Cornerstone Gift Shop and propagating houseplants for sale, as well as tending to the houseplants in the convent. In her spare moments, she will devote time to her poetry, watercolor painting, and the weaving of more of the baskets that she is known for. It will be a busy “retirement,” to be sure.



Donate to our *Sharing Our Blessings* campaign today and your gift **will be matched, dollar-for-dollar** by two very special friends of the Sisters — The Molitor Foundation and We Energies Foundation— now through May 28, 2023. Your \$25 gift will be worth \$50 and \$100 gift worth \$200.

Troubadour is a publication of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. Please send your comments and suggestions to: **Troubadour Editor, Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, 3221 S. Lake Drive, St. Francis, WI 53235**



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