

# Troubadour

A Greeting from Sr. Marcia Lunz

## Welcome to 2022!

Perhaps some of your conversations as we begin 2022 may pursue a question like, "What do you see happening in the new year?" It is not meant literally, as in seeing with the eyes, but rather it is asked from a standpoint of prediction, of hope, or maybe even curiosity. The ideas are speculative, sometimes playful, and may or may not be grounded in reality.

We know that seeing with the eyes involves reality. For example, "I see the tree." However, we also talk

about seeing with the heart, which involves our feelings. Or we see with our intuition, or creativity, or from our experience, which involves bringing insights into consideration.

vision of being a knight in shining armor faded with the experience of personal defeat and poor health as a result of prison confinement.

What didn't fade was his ambition to serve. Gradually, God became central in his life, and he realized how he should live. Among the many ways that Francis showed us how to live was the way he saw God in all of creation. Creation is a gift of God, and to this day, Francis' example can help us to unwrap that gift if we try to see with his eyes and heart.

Air, water, soil, each other - just some of the gifts of creation given to us by God. In the days of this new year can we try, as St. Francis did, to respect and live in harmony with all of God's gifts? May your efforts be seen, accepted and affirmed. May we see peace in our lives as never before.

Blessings throughout 2022!



St. Francis of Assisi can teach us a lot about seeing. As a young man, he saw himself as a knight in shining armor. His father equipped him with a horse and all the clothing and supplies he needed to join a local war. Captured by the enemy, he languished for a year in prison until his father could obtain his release. His



# Invitation to see with eyes & heart

This newsletter gets sent to you in the middle of January, wintertime in the northern regions of the states. Indoor potted plants and bouquets of fresh flowers in the grocery store are usually the way we get to satisfy our longings for spring and flowers in our environment.

Many people mark the coming of spring with the sighting of the first crocuses followed by the first tulips. Their mission is to be signs of life, splashes of color and messengers of hope.

If you have ever looked deeply into the center of a tulip, you know what a wonder it is to behold that center, because it holds such complex parts of the flower - to say nothing of the sheer beauty found in the color and design. These tulips reward us so generously for weathering the cold and blustery temperatures of winter and nurturing the hope of spring.

Tulips originated in Central Asia in the wildlands.

Evidently they caught the eye of flower growers because, around 1000 AD, they were found in Turkey and became favorite flowers in the vast gardens of the Ottomans. It wasn't

until around 1600 that tulips made their way to Holland and the commercial tulip trade was established.

We could say that planting tulip bulbs is an act of faith. As the calendar year comes to an end, tulip bulbs are placed in the ground in the hope that they will weather the winter and break through the ground in spring. In a practical vein, gardeners also hope that the squirrels don't dig up the bulbs for their dining pleasure, or that deer don't eat the new shoots in early spring. The bulbs that develop into flowers are a sign of resilience.

There is symbolism attached to tulips, the most common being perfect or deep love. Since it is an early spring flower that has endured the cold, frozen ground through the winter, the tulip symbolizes rebirth.

In the late fall of 2020, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi planted a tulip garden next to the front entrance of the new convent to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the martyrdom of four women in El

Salvador in December of 1980. These women were Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Jean Donovan. They were murdered by National Guardsman of the Salvadoran government on orders from the commander. The sisters' presence among families and persons living in poverty cast suspicion that they were undermining the government, whereas the sisters were focused on humanitarian assistance and support for survival in the midst of civil strife.

What a joy when the 40 tulip bulbs, planted in faith and mixed with holy soil from the site of the martyrdom, bloomed vibrantly in early spring of 2021! This year, and in the years to follow, they will be a witness to faith and hope, and serve as an Easter sign of Risen Life.



# An Apartment Complex for Birds

From September 1 to October 4 each year, Christians throughout the world gather to renew their commitment to care for the earth through prayer and action. In keeping with the Sixth Anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*, the 2021 theme was "A Home for All? Renewing the Oikos (home) of God."

One of the outcomes of celebrating the *Season of Creation* at St. Francis Convent was providing homes for Purple Martins using gourds grown in the convent gardens, as well as a more traditional Martin house. Eastern Purple Martins are totally dependent on humans to provide their housing. Long ago, Native Americans would hang gourds for them to nest. The birds would help crops grow by eating the insects that could harm the plants. The plan for the Martin gourd apartment complex must be bringing smiles to the Native Peoples that once lived on the property where the convent is now located.

Since Purple Martins like to nest in semi-open areas near water, what better place to begin a colony than on the grounds of St. Francis Convent located by Lake Michigan. Purple Martins are social birds. Their nesting colonies can be made up of hundreds of birds. Their arch enemies are the House Sparrow and the European Starling, who like to take over their nesting sites.

In the spring, the males scout out areas to nest before females and the younger generation make the return trip from South America. The female can lay three to eight eggs. Once hatched, the parents feed their chicks up to 60 times a day. Purple Martins feed upon such delicacies such as flies, beetles, moths, mosquitoes and wasps. Like other swallows, they get their food in flight.

Spring of 2022 will hopefully see many Purple Martins coming to take up residence in the "apartment complex" especially built for them. The Sisters are looking forward to hearing their song fill the air and watching their graceful aerial acrobatics.

If you wish more information on Purple Martins, the websites of the following organizations will be helpful:

Purple Martin Conservation Association  
and Purple Martin Society  
of North America.



# Talk from the Chicken Coop

*(Editor's note - We sent out our roving reporter once again this year and she turned in this 'first person,' sorry, I mean 'first chicken' report from Nutmeg.)*

My name is Nutmeg and I have been in this group of chickens for a few years now — I am easy going, never cause trouble, and try to get along with everyone. The others don't think I notice much, but I am paying attention and I have some things to say about this place.



We have a nice space with lots of room to roam when we are out and about — plenty of bugs and grubs and greenery. But there are some problems from time to time. Ginger (at left) thinks she's the boss and is always pushing the rest of us around. Sometimes she gets in trouble with the boss lady and gets a long, well-deserved time out. But many times she gets away with her very nasty behavior.

The other girls are mostly nice, support each other if in trouble, and get along well — some of them like to make noise and think it's a big deal when they lay an egg — going on and on, yelling and cackling. Sometimes they get snippy with me, and I have to stay away from them. I don't mind being alone, but I do like to have my share of space in the pen and sleeping coop.

The boss lady is very good to us, though some of the girls think she is stingy — we always follow her when she comes outside, and she thinks that's because we love her — but really, it's all about the treats. Sometimes when we are out in the big green space, a big bird flies over and scares us. It is quite terrifying, but also fun because we all start squawking and making as much noise as possible, and the boss lady or her lackey comes running.

We have had several nasty invaders in our sleeping coop as well. If we make enough noise, we can usually wake up the boss lady so she rushes out to battle with it, but other times it's too late and we lose someone. Very sad. 😞

At times we encounter the extras in the boss lady's family - two cats! One of them is small

and hisses at us if we approach — very tough and snippy creature. The other is a big, lumpy thing that seems to be frightened at the slightest move. One cackle or step toward this creature, and he runs the other way — and he is bigger than I am! What a wimp!!

I thought we had plenty in our coop group, but four new girls were added to the mix, taking up space, food and treats. It's hard enough to get my share without these "newbies" moving in. I try to be nice and share, but sometimes I have to send them a message to stay away from the food/treats. Life has its daily challenges!

I do want to comment on how much you have learned about our chicken coop culture, making it a part of your culture as humans. We were and continue to be "influencers" in many ways.

## Lessons Learned from Us Chickens:

- The importance of community — sharing the dirt bath, safety in numbers;
- Always enjoy the outside no matter the weather;
- Make noise (squawk) if you see something is wrong or you want to celebrate;
- Explore / stretch your wings even if you can't fly much.

## Financial Tips: *(Note from Nutmeg: I gathered these from [www.backyardchickens.com](http://www.backyardchickens.com) )*

- Nest egg — save a little money each week;
- Scratch out a living — to earn enough to get by on;
- Don't count your chickens before they hatch — don't plan on an outcome before it happens;
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket;
- Don't spend the egg money before the hen lays eggs;
- Chicken feed — small amount of money;
- Feather your nest — saving for the future.

## Popular Sayings from the Chicken World:

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Hen-pecked                   | Parents with an empty nest |
| Flew the coop                | Madder than a wet hen      |
| Walking on egg shells        | I'm up with the chickens   |
| Not a spring chicken anymore |                            |

Have a great new year and keep learning from the chickens! Signing off for now,

Nutmeg



# Was St. Francis a Bird Watcher?



We have all seen bird baths depicting St. Francis with birds. In the early writings of his life, one can find stories of him preaching to the birds about singing the praises of God. We read of a falcon who would awaken him to pray early in the morning.

Pheasants, larks, swallows, water birds and turtle doves also had special relationships with Francis. So, it makes one wonder... Was Francis a bird watcher?

A special relationship with birds continues to be lived out among some of St. Francis' followers to this day. If you would walk the St. Francis Convent grounds, you will find four feeding stations for birds. One of those stations is cared for by Sr. Mary Kemen. Bird watching has become one of her favorite hobbies since she retired from teaching.

During the early days of the pandemic, Sr. Mary heard of the Citizen Science Program, which provides

projects for adults and children to be involved in scientific research. Project FeederWatch, sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, caught her eye and she decided to get involved. Bird lovers from Canada and the United States provide information to Cornell Lab researchers which analyze the data to determine the abundance and distribution of birds.

Two days a week from November, 2020, to April 2021, Sr. Mary recorded the various species of birds that visited her feeder, as well as tallied the number of each species present. This data was then recorded on the Cornell Lab website. During the 2020-2021 winter season, 25,679 people participated in the project. They provided 184,676 checklists for the scientists to analyze, and recorded 7,551,144 birds.

Being a participant in Project FeederWatch was a rewarding outreach ministry for her during the winter months of the pandemic. This winter she once again is keeping a watchful eye on our little feathered friends and helping the researchers at the Cornell Lab .

## Birding Resources:

### Websites –

[www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)  
[www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu)  
[www.feederwatch.org](http://www.feederwatch.org)

### Magazines –

*Birds and Blooms*  
*Audubon Magazine*  
*Bird Watching*

## Mother Nature's Christmas Ornaments

You have heard of Christmas trees, wreaths, carols and cookies. But what about a Christmas garden? Larry Willkomm provides the Liturgical environment for various church seasons at St. Francis Convent. Larry was thinking of Christmas during the summer when he could be found giving loving care to the plants in his Christmas garden on the convent grounds. He envisioned a Christmas tree decorated in natural beauty to welcome the sisters as they came together to celebrate Mass.

In the spirit of living out the Franciscan value of caring for all of creation, Larry grew plants that provided natural ornaments for the 2021 Christmas tree. The tree was decorated with garlands of red peppers that were strung by Sr. Margaret Klotz. The branches were

*Below:  
Star gourd on  
the vine in the  
convent garden.*



*Above:  
Strawberry popcorn  
cobs were used with the  
husks to form flowers  
on the tree*

# Nature's Ornaments

continued from previous page



Larry tending to the red peppers.

adorned with star gourds, bleached hydrangeas, linaria (also known as silver dollars), pampas grass, and flowers formed by the husks and red cob of the strawberry popcorn plant. None of these natural ornaments would have been possible without the assistance of our bee pollinators. To honor them, honey sticks became the icicles on the tree.

As the sisters came to the convent's Town Square, they were greeted by the presence of a 12-foot tree exquisitely decorated with lights and Mother Nature's ornaments.

Christmas tree ornaments represent the gift of God's love given to us so long ago. One couldn't help but stand in wonder and joy as one gazed upon the beauty of this special Christmas tree.



**Y213581-SSF21-SYM**  
Thinking of you at this difficult time, holding you in prayer, wishing you peace.

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.

## Franciscan Cards & 2022 Calendar

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

If you would like to order cards or our 2022 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)



**Y211099-SSF21-FBDAY**  
May life's simple pleasures be yours to enjoy. Happy Birthday.



**Y219791-SSF21-TY**  
...for your kindness.



**Y214527-SSF21-BDAY**  
Just a little note to sing your praises on your very special day!



**Y215156-SSF21-TOY**  
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