



Troubadour

A Greeting from Sr. Marcia Lunz

Wishing You an Abundance . . .

.... of God's Blessings
in this New Year.

Here we are at the beginning of a new year, a good time to reflect on how we would like to shape the coming days and months in 2015. In this issue of *Troubadour*, we are focusing on how all of us are called to 'mission.' I am using the word to mean: "That which we do to help make the world a better place."

At a recent meeting of our Sisters in which we set our Direction for Mission for the next four years, we agreed that:

As we journey in the next four years, we, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, choose to live more consciously out of a contemplative stance in order to:

- deepen our relationships with God, each other, and all of creation;
- expand our collaborative efforts as needed for our congregation, the church and society;
- stand in solidarity with those on the margins of society through our presence, prayer and / or service.

Our prayer and hope is that together as Sisters we will make a difference wherever we are. As times change, our understanding and experience of how to reach out to others changes. We have ministered in many States throughout the U. S. There was a period in our history in the 1900s when our Sisters went to China and then to Taiwan. In the last 15 years, we have collaborated with the Tertiary Sisters of St.

Francis in Cameroon, Africa, and two communities of Sisters in the States through the Common Venture. www.franciscancommonventure.org

But 'mission' also has a very ordinary face to it. All of us are able to do something that helps to make the world a better place. As you read through this issue of *Troubadour*, I hope that you will be inspired to deepen your commitment to mission through an activity you are already involved in or to try something new. Prompted by the words of Pope Francis, who says that "We are called to wear God's smile,"* let's begin with the power of a smile.

* *Rejoice*, Paragraph 8 from a Letter of Pope Francis to Consecrated Men and Women, 2014.



Potato Chips and God
A little boy wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so he packed his suitcase with a big bag of potato chips and a six-pack of root beer, and started his journey.

When he had gone about three blocks, he met an old man. He was sitting in the park, just staring at some pigeons. The boy sat down next to him and opened his suitcase. He was about to take a drink



Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi

Mission to Foreign Lands:

August 19, 2014, marked the 85th anniversary of the departure of the first four Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi to China. Why did we go to China? First and foremost, we went as an act of Thanksgiving.

It is a common practice to give thanks for the good things we have received. We don't usually think of reaching out in mission as a way of saying *Thank You*. But the Mission Call in the years surrounding 1924, our 75th Anniversary of Foundation, was strong. The congregation had come through some tumultuous times; there was much for which to be grateful; and we had talents to share. Looking back, we see how seeds for mission overseas had fallen on the "good ground" of Thanksgiving and Gratitude.

The sisters' mission to China was set against a background of renewed interest in mission, specifically mission to China. Pope Benedict XV had published an encyclical in 1919 which called for mission awareness on the part of the whole church and on indigenization of local churches, with an emphasis on China. In 1925, a Vatican Exposition on Mission was held and featured cultural, medical and religious items sent by missionaries in many countries. At the end of the Exposition, Pope Pius XI issued an encyclical



on mission. In 1926, thousands of Catholics and missionaries from across the globe attended an International Eucharistic Congress in Mundelein, Illinois. After the Congress, Franciscan Friars missioned to China traveled through the Midwest inviting communities to go to China and share their gifts. We said "yes," and that took many unforeseen roads.

The first volunteers were Sisters Mercedes Tintel (back-left) and Cecilia Raedler (back-right), who called Wisconsin home, and Sisters Virginia Wegenek (front-left) and Reginald Hary (front-right), who originally came from Prussia and Luxemburg respectively. For all four sisters, the culture, language, customs and way of life in China would be challenging. Their principle ministry was teaching young girls everything from arithmetic, English and music, to physical education.

But then life was interrupted. In March of 1943, they and the other sisters who had come in subsequent years were interred in a Japanese concentration camp until 1945. In 1948, the communist government closed all religious schools and convents. Our sisters, with the exception of Sr. Reginald Hary, who had died in the concentration camp and was buried in China, returned to Wisconsin along with 21 Chinese Sisters and one novice who had entered the community. The mission to the people of China did not end there.

In 1967, some of the American missionaries and Chinese sisters began to work in Taiwan among the people there, many of whom had moved from mainland China. Their ministry was focused on education, and the sisters taught students from the university level to kindergarten, and in special education.

A new way of being in mission developed in 1999 as we embarked on celebrating 150 years of founding. Joining us were the sisters who share the same foundation: the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in La Crosse, Wis., and the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist in Meriden, Conn. In planning for the celebration, the leaders of the three congregations "sought out a common venture in ministry, one that would create a bond among themselves and also reach out to address 'systemic change' - especially for women."¹ After looking at several possibilities,

An Act of Thanksgiving and Gratitude

we entered into a mutual companion relationship with the Cameroon Province of the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis.

The goal of the relationship is two-fold: to companion the Tertiary Sisters as they seek to give voice to their African sense of the sacred and to provide the U.S. congregations with a new consciousness, one that challenges them to understand their vocation as Franciscan Catholic women religious in today's intercultural world.²

So once again, out of a stance of Thanksgiving, sisters are now going to western Africa for short-term ministry. In February of 2000, Sister Rebecca Burke (standing-left) was the first from our congregation to go to Cameroon. She was part of an inter-community team to do a needs assessment that explored the areas of health care, education, spirituality and administration. One of the first fruits of the Common Venture needs assessment was the grant she applied for and received for the Shisong School of Nursing & Midwifery.

Since this initial endeavor, Sister Joanne Meyer (seated-center) spent time in Bamenda, Cameroon, in 2001 and 2007, giving retreats to small groups of sisters. Sister Gabrielle Kowalski (standing-right) worked in the summers of 2004 and 2005 with teachers who needed updating for their professional requirements. Sister Marcia Lunz (seated-left) has taught in the Renewal Program for sisters three different times between 2011 and 2014, and Sister Ann Kelley (seated-right) in 2012. This past spring, Sister Nancy Kazik (standing-center) taught leadership courses.

Being on mission in a foreign land holds its challenges, whether that be China or Cameroon. The sisters who were in China wrote about their life there, how they needed to improvise and be resourceful to meet their basic needs. Their commitment was a long-term commitment.

The sisters who have been in Cameroon were there short-term and living with the Tertiary Sisters. All have met some challenges in the African environment, but the experience of giving and receiving in mutuality far outweighs any difficulties. The Tertiary Sisters worry that they have so little to give in return for what they feel they are receiving from us. However,

every sister returns to the States changed because of what she has received. Some of these gifts have been and continue to be:

- The grace to witness the Tertiary Sisters' long, hard hours of work done in a spirit that is to be envied. They are committed and a real hope for the future of the Church in Africa;
- The experience of the Tertiary Sisters' willingness to share everything - meals, liturgy, prayer and space - in the hope that we would be comfortable;
- The grace-filled interaction and interchange of ideas with the Tertiary Sisters, and their profound sense of gratitude for what we are doing for them;
- The experience of speaking heart to heart with the sisters;
- The example of the Tertiary Sisters using everything, not throwing away anything that has some use.
- The relationships that have developed that keep part of our hearts in Africa.

We are working directly with the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, and they, through their work with the people of Cameroon, extend our work indirectly. Our sense of Thanksgiving continues to deepen because of God's Spirit among us.

¹ By *God's Providence* by Sister Doris Pehowski, OSF. pg. 207.

² *Ibid.* pg. 208.



How St. Francis Lived His Mission to All Creation

St. Francis lived in a time of chivalry. Courtesy to others was an expectation. However, St. Francis extended his practice of courtesy to all of God's creation. In giving respect and love to all, he experienced God's love and was filled with joy. This is how Thomas of Celano, one of St. Francis' biographers, describes Francis' actions for us:

Francis abounded in the spirit of charity, he was filled with compassion, not only toward people in need, but even toward dumb animals, reptiles, birds and other creatures, sensible and insensible creatures. Who would be able to narrate the sweetness he enjoyed while contemplating in creatures the wisdom of their creator, His power and goodness. He was often filled with a wonderful and ineffable joy from this consideration as he looked upon the sun, while he beheld the moon, while he gazed upon the stars and firmament. Toward little worms he even glowed with a very great



love. He would see to it that bees were provided honey in the winter or the best wine, lest they die from the cold. What great gladness the beauty of flowers brought to his mind when he saw the shape of their beauty and

perceived the fragrance of their sweetness. When he found an abundance of flowers, he preached to them. He invited them to praise the Lord as though they were endowed with reason, in the same way, he exhorted with sincere purity cornfields and vineyards, stones and forests and all the beautiful things of the fields: fountains of water, the green things of gardens, earth, fire, air, and wind to love God and serve Him willingly.

Taken from the Study Guide, Topic 11, "A Community of Brothers and Sisters" in A Franciscan Retreat with Br. Bill Short, CD 5, Now You Know Media.

Potato Chips and God

continued

from his root beer, when he noticed that the old man looked hungry, so he offered him some chips. The man gratefully accepted it and smiled at him.

His smile was so pretty that the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered him a root beer. Again, he smiled at him. The boy was delighted! They sat there all afternoon eating and smiling, but they never said a word.

As twilight approached, the boy realized how tired he was and he got up to leave; but before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around, ran back to the old man, and gave him a hug. He gave him his biggest smile ever.

When the boy opened the door to his house a short time later, his mother was surprised by the look of joy on his face. She asked him, "What did you do today that made you so happy?" He replied, "I had lunch with God." But before his mother could respond, he added, "You know what? He's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!"

Meanwhile, the old man also radiant with joy, returned to his home. His son was stunned by the look of peace on his face and he asked, "Dad, what did you do today that made you so happy?"

He replied "I ate potato chips in the park with God." However, before his son responded, he added, "You know, he's much younger than I expected."

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. People come into our lives for a reason, a season, or a lifetime! Embrace all equally!

Have lunch with God.....
bring chips.

Author unknown. Several web sites have this story in slightly different versions but all with no acknowledgement of authorship.



Do Pets Go to Heaven?

Do Pets go to Heaven when they die?

It is a frequent question from those who are experiencing the loss of a pet. There is no definitive answer, but it may be helpful to reflect on John Muir's journal entry on the magnificence of bears. What about the magnificence of other animals?

Thoughts upon Finding a Dead Yosemite Bear

Toiling in the treadmills of life, we hide from the lessons of Nature. We gaze morbidly through civilized fog upon our beautiful world clad with seamless beauty, and see ferocious beasts and wastes and deserts. But savage deserts and beasts and storms are expressions of God's power inseparably companioned by love. We deprecate bears.



But grandly they blend with their native mountains. They roam the sandy slopes on lily meads, through polished glacier canyons, among the solemn firs and

brown sequoia, manzanita, and chaparral, living upon red berries and gooseberries, little caring for rain or snow . . . Magnificent bears of the Sierra are worthy of their magnificent homes. They are not companions of men, but children of God, and His charity is broad enough for bears. They are the objects of His tender keeping . . .

We seek to establish a narrow lane between ourselves and angels, but ask a partition barrier of infinite width to show the rest of creation its proper place.

Bears are made of the same dust as we, and breathe the same winds and drink of the same waters. A bear's days are warmed by the same sun, his dwellings are overdomed by the same blue sky, and his life turns and ebbs with heart-pulsings like ours, and was poured from the same First Fountain. And whether he at last goes to our stingy heaven or no, he has terrestrial immortality. His life, not long, not short, knows no beginning, no ending. To him life, unstinted, unplanned, is above the accidents of time, and his years, markless and boundless, equal Eternity. God bless Yosemite bears!

John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir, pg. 82-83

Sadie's Story



Sadie is originally from Kentucky. Her story is both sad and encouraging.

After delivering a litter of pups, she was shot in the head and back, and left for dead. Fortunately, someone found her and eventually sent her to an animal shelter in Wisconsin. That is where her caregiver, Joal Derse Dauer, met her and adopted her. Joal is definitely living out her mission to tend to Sadie with great care and compassion.

As a result of the gun shot, Sadie has multiple medical issues, one of them being that, while her hind legs have mobility, they are not strong enough to carry her weight. Just recently she has been outfitted with a "wheelchair" that helps with the distribution of weight and gives her the freedom to walk on her own.

Sadie travels to schools and businesses teaching acceptance of people and animals who have special needs. Children in wheelchairs love her because their legs aren't strong either. If you would like your school or business to have a visit from Sadie, submit your request at www.savingsadie.com. Information will be sent to you!



Door County Sled Dogs (DCSD) All rescued dogs / All volunteer organization)



The mission of this recreational dog sled team is education and fun - for children, adults, and families - year-round!

It all began with Mushers Rick Desotelle and Bonnie Ulrich (retired educators) training in the city of Milwaukee and outback areas of Door County. After much volunteerism and local interest about rescues, dog-powered sports, good pet care and obedience, as well as leadership and team qualities, the DCSDs partnered up with the Milwaukee County Parks and other civic groups to provide outstanding presentations and fun-filled rides and other experiences. Go to their web site for information on upcoming events: www.doorcountysleddogs.com.

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.



New Pet Medal Design Available for Donations of \$25 or more.

**Gold tone. Loop to attach to a collar
Pet name can be engraved on back.**

PHOTO GALLERY

We appreciate photos of domestic animals and birds, as well as animals seen in nature, for this publication. Unfortunately we are not able to use laser or inkjet printouts. Thanks for your contributions.



Sassy
4 yrs old



Isadora & Augustine

11 yrs old



Nicky (from a shelter)



Domino (a rescue)



Apollo (a rescue)



Quinn and Blake

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