



# Troubadour

*A Greeting from Sr. Marcia Lunz*

## It's Time to Welcome You . . .

**.... to a New Year ~ 2016!**

What will this new year bring? What can each of us do to make it a better year than last year? I would like to suggest putting our efforts into a focused endeavor which can give us a sense of purpose and reap the gifts that doing something together brings. This is at the core of ministry for the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

In this newsletter we are going to explore many dimensions of 'home.' We often say that "home is where the heart is." The sounds of 'peace on earth' that the angels sang at Bethlehem fell on the ears of so many persons away from home for the census. But there in the stable, Mary and Joseph welcomed their son in a makeshift home.

The encyclical letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato Sí*, challenges us to care for our common home, Mother Earth. The Earth is home to all of us. There are many ways we can literally make the planet we live on a healthier and safer home for everyone and everything.

Across the globe and in our own cities, the horror of human trafficking is often a veiled reality. It is veiled because we don't know enough about it to be able to recognize it and then act. The women religious of Wisconsin are coordinating efforts to raise

awareness. What do you see of these kinds of efforts in your hometown or when traveling?

We feel at home when we can live without fear and insecurity. Helping one another creates bonds that build community and a feeling of closeness to each other. How we learn to do this may come from very unexpected sources. May 2016 be the year we focus on 'home building' with family, friends and co-workers.

"Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth."

*From "Laudato Sí" by Pope Francis - Paragraph 92*



## Bee Alert

Have you noticed that the honey you put on your morning toast or pancakes, or in your baking, has gotten more expensive in the past few years?

Well, it has...dramatically. And the reason is simple...there just isn't as much honey available

Continued inside





because there aren't as many bees making it. The reason for that, though, isn't simple. In fact, no one knows for sure why there are fewer honey

bees. ...a LOT fewer honey bees. And, while there has been a great deal of speculating and finger-pointing, the real verdict is still out and the answer may never be known.

Bees are primary among nature's pollinators. They travel from flower to flower collecting nectar for making their food, which is honey. As they visit each flower, pollen gets caught on their bodies, and as they migrate from blossom to blossom, they naturally pollinate the plants as they go.

While the bees are not alone in this process -- hummingbirds, bats, moths, butterflies, beetles and other of Nature's creatures do it as well -- bees are the primary pollinators. It is estimated that as much as one-third of the crop species WORLD-WIDE depend on bees for their pollination process. This affects foods ranging from apples and oranges to zucchinis and everything in between, including, nuts, grapes, blueberries, melons - you name it. Putting a domestic value on it, honey bees pollinate approximately \$10 billion worth of crops in the U.S. alone each year. **(Mythbuster:** Cereal grain crops like rice, corn and wheat, and even tomatoes and pecans are NOT dependent on insects or other outside factors. Instead, such crops are self- and/or wind-pollinated.)

## But what's happened?

Unfortunately the number of both native pollinators and domesticated bee populations are declining. During the winter of 2006 - 2007, beekeepers from around the country began reporting unusually high

losses of bees in their hives...some ranging from 30 to 90 percent. The cause was unknown and the symptoms being shown were also mysterious.

When the trend continued for the next few years, industry-wide alerts and watches were put into place. The term Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) was coined as a catch-all phrase to describe what was happening to the honey bee population. What has been shown to happen is this: the worker bees in a colony disappear and leave behind a queen, plenty of food and a few nurse bees to take care of the remaining immature bees and the queen. But without the worker bees, a colony cannot exist for long and all eventually die.

While there have been media reports blaming the use of agricultural and horticultural pesticides for the problem, the symptoms of such a poisoning - numbers of dead bees outside the hive -- are not consistent with CCD where there are very few, if any, dead bees near the hives.

Theories that are being studied include outbreaks of an invasive varroa mite, new diseases such as Israeli Acute Paralysis virus, and stress caused by such factors as being transported to multiple locations around the country when weather dictates or when bees are needed elsewhere for seasonal use. Add to these an increased loss of habitat as urban development and spread continues, and as a result, natural food sources have become less available.

## So what can be / is being done?

A lot. A great deal of bee industry, agricultural and government resources are being channeled into research and conservation programs to find a real cause of the problem as well as possible cures and preventions. It has been noted that the number of cases of CCD have declined substantially over the past five years. Even winter losses, typically averaging over 28 percent, dropped to 23.1 percent for the winter of 2014 / 2015.

# What's Being Done . . .

The greater positive result is increased public awareness and very concerted drives to rebuild and replenish natural food sources for the bee populations. Multiple sources and guides have become available on the internet for anyone interested in providing habitat for pollinators. One of the most substantial and user-friendly of these is <http://www.pollinator.org/guides.htm>. This site offers over 30 region-specific guides for selecting plants for pollinators across the United States and Canada. Each is downloadable and provides information regarding regional climates, pollinators of choice that are indigenous to the areas, types of flowers and vegetation preferred by various pollinators, shelter needed, and even flowering seasons by month for various trees, shrubs, vines, flowers, vegetables and other plants.

**(A caveat:** There are many web sites with particular agendas that may skew the information they present. It is recommended that you source information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or from independent studies by universities around the country.)

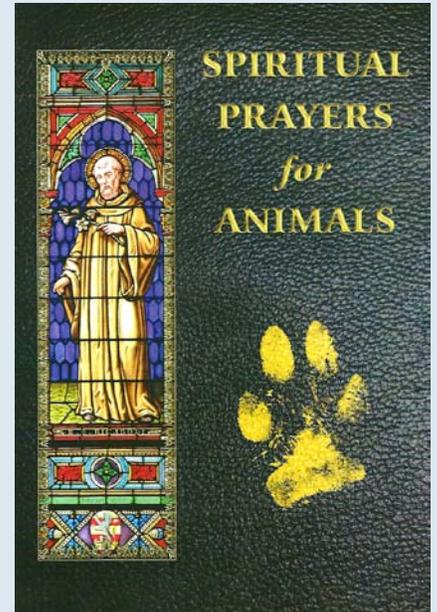
On an even wider scope, municipalities have become involved. For example, the city of Milwaukee began permitting beekeepers in 2010. Green Bay did away with the permit requirement in 2012 and currently has 75 very active bee colonies in the city alongside urban gardens. Even cities as large as Chicago have become active as it has 142 beekeepers currently registered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

So while we don't know exactly what is causing CCD, everyone interested in providing habitat favorable to pollinators can certainly become involved even in little and inexpensive ways such as nurturing certain plants around their homes, and making sure to read and follow label directions for products used in flower beds and gardens.

In the meantime, all efforts can be helpful in coming to a solution to the problem that can only leave a sweet taste for all involved.



## Spiritual Prayers for Animals



**Spiritual Prayers for Animals** is a collection of inspirational quotes and meaningful prayers to bless all those special animals in your life and those who dedicate their lives saving them and us.

The graphics and artwork are in full color.

If you would like to obtain a copy go to: <http://www.spiritualprayersforanimals.com>.

# Trafficking Has No Place in Our Towns

Human trafficking is modern day slavery and no place is exempt. It is found in small towns, rural areas and large cities. Traffickers know no boundaries for their work of intimidating and controlling their victims. Among the most vulnerable are young girls and children between the ages of 12 and 17. They are scouted out for both sex and labor trafficking.

As Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, we are collaborating with other women religious to raise awareness of trafficking in Wisconsin by purchasing ads on buses in Milwaukee, Green Bay, Fond du Lac and Oshkosh. By providing the hotline and text contact information, anyone who needs help or information knows the best place to call. In addition, the ad helps educate those who are not aware of this crime.

In keeping with our long standing ministry in education, sisters are also preparing a toolkit for Catholic parishes throughout Wisconsin. Statistics, pertinent information and resources are a part of this kit. Parishes are encouraged to collaborate with local police and participate in existing programs.

Trafficking is a global enterprise. It will take an enormous amount of effort to eradicate this crime. The first step is to inform everyone

how persons are first enticed into leaving homes and families to "make money," and then coerced through intimidation and fear to stay. The second step is to take action in our own hometowns and make a difference for the victims close to us.

In the Milwaukee area, we are collaborating with several organizations to establish a House of Hospitality for women who are trying to reestablish their lives. This house would be a drop-in center where the women can feel safe, receive the help and information they need, and connect with other women for support and friendship.

Our Direction for Mission calls us to stand in solidarity with those on the margins. Women who have been forced to work in demeaning ways, without respect for their rights and freedom, deserve to be helped to achieve their dreams and goals. We want to do our part.

## Puppy Love:

### Life & Relationship Lessons from Dogs

- ❖ Be excited to see those you care about. Imagine greeting a loved one with the enthusiasm a dog shows when its owner gets home. Imagine how loved that person would feel.
- ❖ Stop and sniff around. Take a dog for a walk, and he takes time to check out everything along the way. He explores the world around him. Imagine if you paid more attention to your surroundings. You might notice beauty you never knew existed and better appreciate the little things.
- ❖ Express yourself. When a dog wants outside, he whines and may paw at the door to let a human know. Imagine how much better life might be if when you needed something, you simply asked for it and didn't expect others to read your mind.
- ❖ Don't take yourself too seriously. A dog doesn't care how silly he looks with his head hanging out of the car window or while romping around in the park. Imagine if you didn't care what others thought of you as you tried a new fitness class at the gym.



# God

## Spelled Backwards...

**Nothing can separate us from the love of God – Romans 8:35**

I never knew what a blessing dogs were until an early morning encounter with our daughter's poodle/schnauzer mix named Spike. I was restless and anxious because I was leaving on a long journey and Spike could sense something was wrong. He came up to me, put his head on my lap and started licking me, telling me in effect, "It's OK Paw Paw. Don't worry. I'll be waiting for you when you get back."

God has blessed us with a second precious dog named Michael. Spike and Michael love us unconditionally. No matter the situation, these boys love without reservation. God created these wonderful creatures known as dogs to show the human race what love really is all about.

Our Eternal Father loves us unconditionally and without reservation. He tells us not to worry because everything is going to be OK. "I love you!"

Our job is to follow His example and love each other totally and unreservedly. Spike, Michael and all our canine friends can teach us what it is to love without condition. Is it really a coincidence that God spelled backwards is Dog?

*Dave and Sandy Shiple*



## Fearless 2000 – 2015

Everyone who visited The Bridge-Between Retreat Center, Denmark, Wisconsin, during the past 15 years was welcomed by Fearless, the tabby cat. He arrived mysteriously as a kitten in August 2000 and made his home in the barn. Diane Eparvier discerned his name after observing the abandonment with which Fearless jumped from a beam onto her shoulders as she was feeding the llamas.

Fearless took his responsibility as an ambassador of God's presence seriously and responded with a hearty purr whenever he was petted or allowed the luxury of curling up for a nap on someone's lap. He lived his days fully by protecting the property from predators like chipmunks and mice. He joined the Bridge community and retreatants for prayer in the chapel, supervising (albeit unwanted) Sister Joann and Dayna in the garden, assisting Holly and Jessica in the office, and making sure his food dish was replenished frequently with fresh supplies. But he waited patiently while Caroline and Diane finished feeding the llamas, chickens, geese and duck before he got his portion of attention.

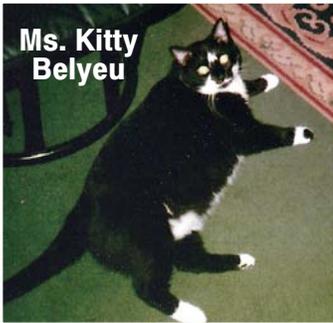
A bit of catnip brought out his wild side, and his favorite position was curling around the back of someone's neck. Fearless is shown here with our Sr. Diana Tergerson!

Early last year, his health declined rapidly, probably due to a cat virus, and Fearless died March 22, 2015. Although 15 years is a short time to us humans, the equivalent in cat years is 77, which represents the purrfect fullness with which Fearless lived each day as he made his home in everyone's heart.



**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.



**Ms. Kitty Belyeu**



**Carla**



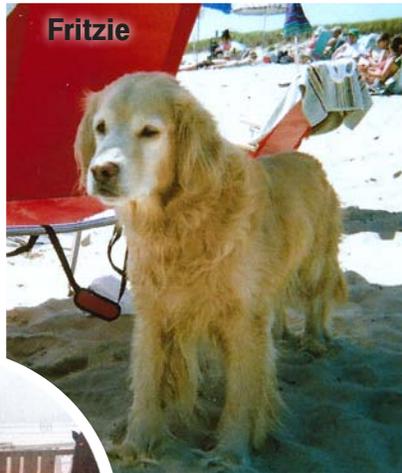
**Gerri**



**Becky & Abbey**



**Zeke**



**Fritzie**



**Lacy**



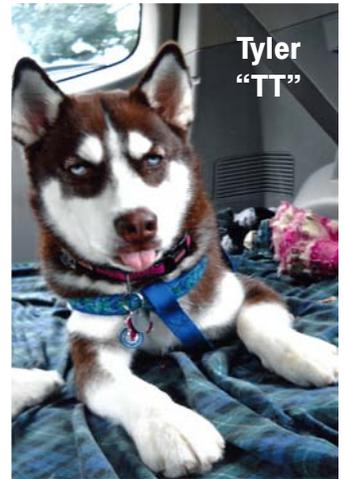
**Shep-Shep**



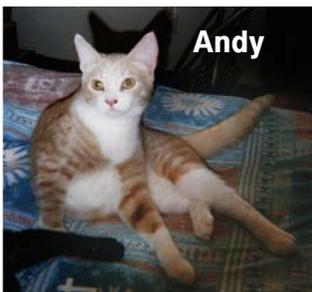
**Odie**



**Molly & Mr. Fritz**



**Tyler "TT"**



**Andy**



**Domonig**

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