



Troubadour

A Greeting from Sr. Marcia Lunz

Welcome to 2017 . . .

The New Year is underway

. . . and now we have a bit more time to reflect on the gift of time that this New Year holds. Sometimes we like to look ahead and calendar in all the major events that are going to happen - the special anniversary, the family reunion, the long awaited trip. Sometimes we take life one day at a time, focusing on life as it unfolds. Both are necessary.

In this issue of *Troubadour*, there are articles that show how both the long range and short range view of time blend. Larry Wilkomm, who decorates St. Francis Chapel in our Motherhouse, plants his garden in the spring with the long view to preserving the plants and flowers for use throughout the year. In the short term, he selects what he wants from the trays of dried leaves and blooms to make up his bouquets.

Baby chicks are purchased with the long view of collecting fresh eggs. Before that daily ritual can happen though, there is a good deal of nurturing that goes into bringing the chicks to full growth.

And sometimes there is a reflective view of time when the past and

present come together and memories are infused with new insights. Note the reflection on the oak leaf.

As we enter more fully into this New Year, how helpful it would be to develop a perspective and use of time that balances urgency with calm, work with leisure, busyness with relationships, self-preoccupation with care for others.

Last summer at our annual Assembly, we took a fresh look at our Charism which is: "As Franciscan women, we trust in God's providence and live the Gospel as we nurture a deep sense of worth of every person and all of creation." In this New Year, we, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, know in our hearts that today, this year, is the time we have to live out our charism so that the lives of others may benefit from our prayer and our action.

In the days and months ahead, may the gift of time offer you many opportunities to enjoy all the life that surrounds you and may it energize you to share your time in meaningful ways.



OSF Rain Garden Put Spotlight on Water

In the last three years, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District (MMSD) has selected a city for a Green Summer Project. They collaborate with the community and individuals to better manage water, especially from runoff. They also help with building rain gardens, and providing free rain barrels and education on water conservancy.

MMSD chose the City of St. Francis for the 2016 project. In December 2015, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi were asked for a letter of support for the project, which was sent with an assurance that we would benefit. Subsequently, MMSD came with its expertise and walked through our wetlands, giving advice and possibilities of future help with water management. They may also provide some soil amendments in certain areas as needed.

On August 11, MMSD installed the rain garden. The process involved removing the sod from the site, and then adding fresh soil which contained half compost and half sand for good water distribution and absorption. Drainage extensions were added to the downspouts and placed on both the east and west ends of the garden to funnel the rains into the garden space. After that the seedling plants were spaced and placed as needed to provide a full and appealing look to the garden site.

Sized approximately 12 by 20 feet, it features 175 native plants that absorb water, such as little blue stem grass, purple cone flowers, butterfly weed, asters, brown-eyed Susans and more. These varieties will provide color and contrast. MMSD provided the materials and the volunteers to complete the project.



More Summer Garden Events

On August 2, Sisters Helene Mertes and Mary Lou Schramer, along with the Land Use Committee, hosted a dinner in the gardens to share both knowledge and a meal with Sisters Hilda and Delphine, Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis from Cameroon. The ingredients used in preparing the main stir fry dish were harvested from the OSF gardens.



Environment: Bringing the Outside In

An integral part of every Liturgy or prayer event is the "environment" - the look and feel of the space that it shared and that draws the participants into the spirituality of the moment.

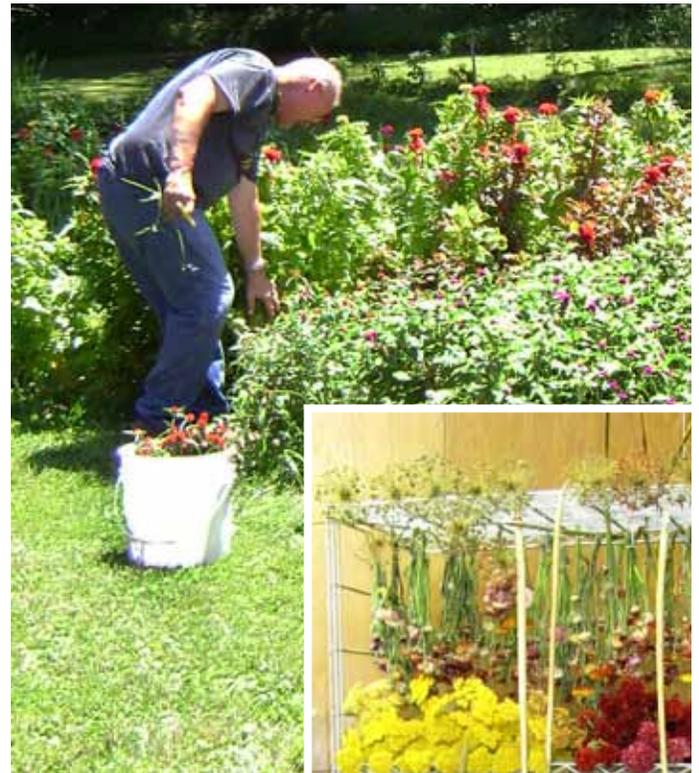
In St. Francis Chapel in the congregation Motherhouse, that environment is enhanced by Larry Willkomm, environmental coordinator, who has studied and continues to perfect the art of bringing nature's elements indoors. By preserving flowers and other plant elements through a variety of means, the beauty of the OSF summer gardens continues to live in the chapel year round.

Larry works with a collection of live plants that provide him with flowers, pods, decorative leaves and stems, and the like. The drying process can take place in a microwave, with desiccant particles, or simply by hanging in a

manner that preserves the shape and letting time do its work.

While he enjoys explaining the processes involved in his handiwork, he prefers to talk about his work in terms of creating an inviting atmosphere that welcomes and encourages prayer and reflection.

More photos on next page



on the Motherhouse Grounds

Sisters Helene (left) and Mary Lou (right), along with the Land Use Committee, held a special garden lunch for the garden volunteers to thank them for all the work they did (weeding, planting, cleaning up, etc.) on the grounds for the 2016 growing season.



Enhanced Environment:

St. Francis Chapel at the Motherhouse

continued from previous page

The photos included here show the decor from "Mother Nature" and Larry's handiwork that graced the chapel at the time this newsletter went to print.



Life Lessons

Many of our sisters grew up on family farms in the rural areas of the Midwest. They bring knowledge and experiences that connect us with the land and the sources of our food. In addition, they bring stories, old and new, that not only entertain, but that set us to thinking about life in deeper ways. Here are two stories from Sr. Julianne Koch.

The Chicken Story

My sister, Anna, lives on a farm in northwest Wisconsin. In May, she buys baby chicks and keeps them in the barn until they've grown large enough to join the flock of older chickens in the chicken coop. This usually takes until the end of August.

Moving the young chickens and mixing them with the older chickens is a clandestine affair



Did you know that?

- If you have the flu and cuddle your dog or cat for comfort, your pet is at risk for catching the flu?
- Sharing apples, bananas, carrots and celery with your dog is okay?
- Sharing grapes, raisins, avocados and onions is not okay?
- Cats are not exempt from needing exercise and this includes mental stimulation?

"Pets are humanizing. They remind us we have an obligation and responsibility to preserve and nurture and care for all of life."

James Cromwell

...from Rural Experiences

that takes place at night. Chickens can't see in the dark, so they are more cooperative. One person can carry two chickens at a time, one under each arm. Once the chicken house is reached, the younger chickens are placed on the new roosts added for them. The old chickens have already claimed their spots and would never allow new residents to take it. "The old hens rule the roost."

In the morning, the old hens claim the feeder space, too, so the young ones can't get to the feeder. When the door opens to let the chickens out to roam the farm yard for the day, the young ones go back into the coop and take their turn at the feeder.

This illustrates how tough it is to find your way into a new group if you're the new chicken. Figuring out what works and repeating it often enough has proven that time obscures divisions and the end result is one flock.

Are there any lessons to learn from the chickens that can help the human community?

The Oak Leaf

From a November email sent to siblings and copied to an aunt:

I have often said that as you are walking through the woods, if you catch a falling leaf, it's good luck. You can make a wish. . . or something to that effect.

But if you have ever tried to catch a falling leaf, it's not an easy thing to do!

Two weeks ago I was working in one of the county parks as part of my job . . . a beautiful day. I was

missing our Dad of course. While walking along a trail and looking at a map on my clipboard, no kidding, if an oak leaf didn't land perfectly on that clipboard. I thought it was Dad winking at me. I have the leaf on my desk at the moment. Red Oak.

Just thought I would share. . . Love you all.

Reply from the aunt:

Here is a poem I've had in my desk drawer for years and I read it about now each year:

FAME

*Of the 20,000 leaves of the Oak Tree
About 12,000 are burned
6,000 rotted on the ground
2,000 disappeared in the river
And 1 was pressed in a book
Pasted on paper*

*Hung on the kindergarten wall
And considered by everyone to be
Quite a miraculous thing.*

John Dickson

Still raking,
Your aunt

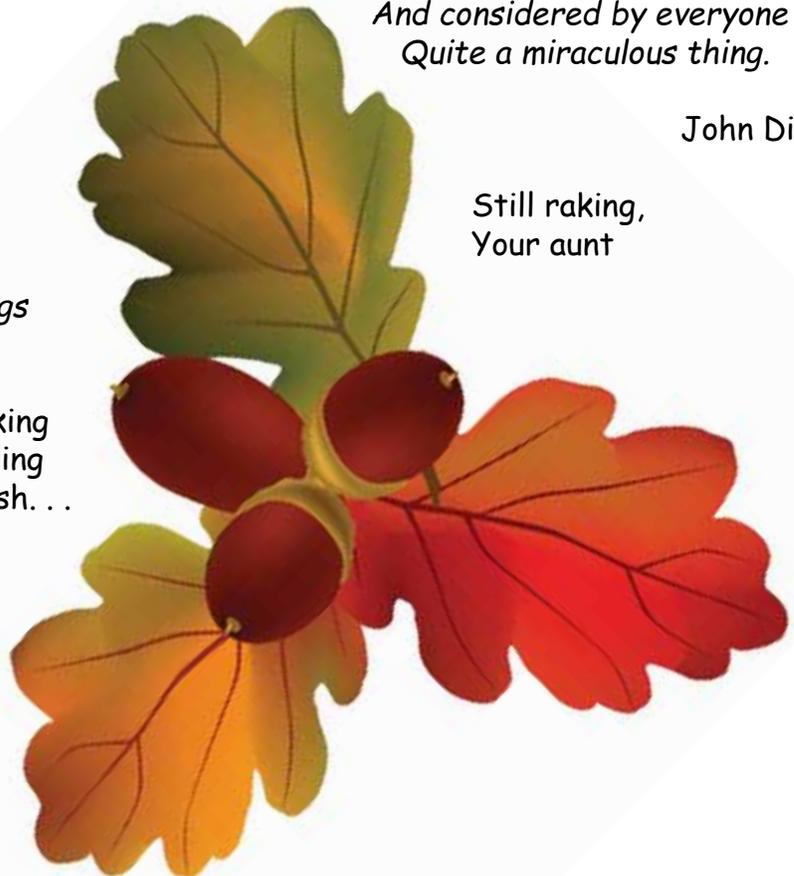


PHOTO GALLERY

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. Thank for your contributions.



Dixie



CJ (left) & Lucy (right)



Chisholm



Ellie Mae (left) & Goldie (right)



Oreo Gazarra



Charm, Moses & Hershey



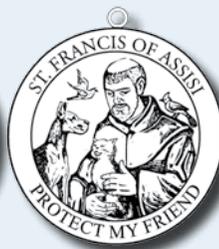
O'Baxter

Sister



(Name not provided)

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.

Troubadour is a publication of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis, Wisconsin. Please send your comments and suggestions to:

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