

Troubadour

A Greeting from Sr. Marcia Lunz

Anticipating the Paths of 2018 . . .

So many conversations at this time of year begin with the exclamation: "Where did the last year go?" If time moves with regularity, why doesn't it feel that way to us? Some days fly by; others drag.

I won't get into a scientific explanation of this, but I do want to offer you an image to consider. Our life is a journey. We are on a path that is unique to each of us. No two people's experience is the same. So whether life seems to move quickly or slowly, what makes all the difference is the meaning that we derive from our lives. I encourage you to be a 'meaning maker.'

There are practices, or habits, that we can engage in to allow ourselves to derive meaning from our day-to-day living. One of these is reflection - thinking back over the day in the evening, or choosing a day a week to think back over the past week. Some people like to write in a journal or diary about the happenings that occurred and the feelings that were present.

A good place for reflection is outdoors and walking through nature. St. Francis was a great walker out of necessity to get from one place to another, but also for reflection. On the paths through the countryside,

he connected with God in the midst of God's creation. And it became a prayer for him.

The urban forest on the grounds of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi has walking paths that meander through it. Pathways are covered with wood chips to allow access for wheelchairs. The walk continues to the west to a reflection garden (see Page 3). Slow walking and mindful gazing offer an antidote to the speed with which we live our lives.

What are your favorite paths to walk? What is your favorite garden spot or window view? Is there something you check out each time you are in your favorite place, like the blooming of new flowers or the migration of birds? If you walk a pet, what are the places you are forced to stop because your pet is interested in investigating it?

And, finally, what are the paths in our hearts that keep us mindful of others' needs, or that call us to forgiveness and acceptance? Are the paths of love and gratitude travelled regularly?

May 2018 unfold the path of love in your life in many new ways. "Live to love. Love to live."



Traversing the Umbria Region of Italy:

Janice Parrott works in Fund Development and Poverello Prints for the congregation. She and her husband walked 7.5 miles of the Franciscan Trail, from Valfabbrica to Assisi, on September 11, 2017. In this article, she shares her experience and photos.

The Franciscan path in central Italy follows along many of the routes St. Francis took on his travels. It officially starts in LaVerna and ends at the Vatican in

Rome, but it is not a single path from start to finish - rather it traverses the countryside where St. Francis worked and ministered throughout his life.

The trail goes through Assisi, in the beautiful green Umbria region of Italy, the birthplace and final resting place of St Francis. It is the center of much Franciscan history. The trail also passes through Gubbio, famous for the story told about St. Francis and the wolf, and through Greccio, where Francis recreated the Bethlehem nativity scene. The path, also called the Franciscan Trail, is traveled by pilgrims and hikers, and is a destination for many who want to truly experience, both physically and spiritually, the area where Francis lived and ministered.

It winds through beautiful countryside, olive groves and vineyards, as well as many medieval towns not often visited by tourists. There are dense forests, mountain ranges, park lands, rivers and farms.

The trail is marked with Tau crosses - the symbol of Franciscan life - painted on signposts or trees. Walkers experience nature far from large cities and noise,



Map Source:
<https://caminoist.org>

The Franciscan Trail - La Verna to Rome

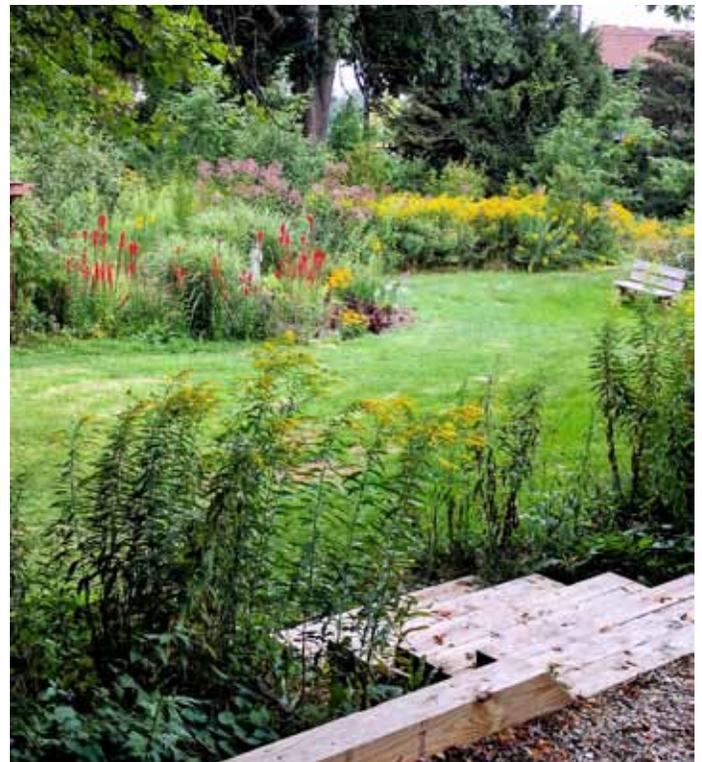
and perhaps can imagine St. Francis and his wanderings in this beautiful countryside.

Approaching Assisi from the north, going through the woods below the Basilica of St. Francis, the basilica can be seen in the distance, above the tree line (at right).

The Franciscan Sacred Forest is also in this region. It is outside of a convent where St. Francis used to stay. The Bosco Sacro Trail is pictured below.



Understanding that not everyone can experience the Umbria Region, the congregation has worked with the Motherhouse grounds to provide space for that type of communion with nature and the Franciscan charism. The reflection garden pictured below was established to enhance the spiritual experience of walking near the restored wetlands on the property.



The Wolf and the Path into Our Hearts

The story of St. Francis and the wolf of Gubbio is often told. It is a compelling story because it asks each of us to look into our own hearts and think about the needs of others.

There is also a Cherokee Indian story about two wolves which asks us to look into our hearts. It is interesting to note that these stories come out of two different continents and two very different cultures. They are both about feeding a wolf, and their message to live in harmony with ourselves and others is just as timely today.

St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio

In the small town of Gubbio in Italy, the people were living in fear because of a wolf that came into their village and attacked their animals and small children. Not knowing what to do about the wolf, they interceded with Francis of Assisi to help them. Francis came and sought out the wolf. He learned that the wolf came into the town because it was hungry. Peace was achieved when the townspeople agreed to feed the wolf, and in turn, the wolf agreed to do no more harm.

It often happens in life that our enemy, no matter whatever or whomever that might be, has unfulfilled needs. If we can help fill those needs, everyone is at peace.



The Wolves Within

(from the Cherokee Indian heritage)

An old grandfather said to his grandson, who came to him with anger at a friend who had done him an injustice, "Let me tell you a story.

I, too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do.

But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times." He continued, "It is as if there are two wolves inside me. One is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him, and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way.

But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing.

Sometimes, it is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit."

The boy looked intently into his grandfather's eyes and asked, "Which one wins, Grandfather?"

The grandfather smiled and quietly said, "The one I feed."

Source:

<http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/TwoWolves-Cherokee.html>

The Many Benefits of Trees

As Franciscans, the celebration of Earth Day each spring is a way for us to honor and show respect for creation in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. In his Canticle of Creatures, Francis highlights Mother Earth: Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother



Oak tree planting in the urban forest on the sisters' property in 2016.

Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.

Today people from all walks of life work for the good of the planet. Wisconsin can boast of two prominent leaders in the work of conservation and awareness of the condition of the environment, Aldo Leopold and Gaylord Nelson. The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, too, are trying to do their best to promote awareness and put best practices into action.

The urban forest that was planted a few years ago on an unused athletic field is growing and contributing to the environment in a positive way.

Trees produce oxygen, clean the air and reduce global warming.

Trees release oxygen as a product of photosynthesis. Two medium-sized, healthy trees can supply the oxygen required for a single person for a year.

Trees clean the air by absorbing greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming; they store carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas, in their stems and leaves.

Trees capture airborne particles such as dirt, dust and soot; a mature tree can absorb 120-240 pounds of particulate pollution each year.

A 2008 study by researchers at Columbia University found that more trees in urban neighborhoods correlate with a lower incidence of asthma.

Source:
<https://www.fuf.net/benefits-of-urban-greening/>

For all the good that trees do, hugging a tree might be a good way to say 'thank you.'



Gardening with God

When you garden, your hands are touching God's amazing creation. The soil, crumbling beneath your fingers, supports the life of the flowers, plants and trees that God created to beautify our world and sustain us.

As you work the soil, work out problems with God as Counselor. As you weed and remove old blooms, ask God to "prune" the distractions from your life so that you can grow stronger in your relationship with Him. As you plant, ask God to help you plant the seeds of His love in others.

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2017 Motherhouse Pet Blessing



Cute Denim Dog Toys



Visit this website - pillarboxblue.com/handmade-dog-toys/ - to learn how to "upcycle" old jeans as toys and treats for your dog.

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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