

The Spirit

October 2023

The Season After Pentecost



From the Rector

THE REV. ROB HARRIS

On October 8th we will celebrate the Feast of St. Francis. The actual feast day is October 4th. The service is always a meaningful and fun way to celebrate the unique bonds we have with our pets. It is also a time to name as holy that which God has created (namely, our dogs, cats, birds, horses, you name it.) Among many other wonderful things, St. Francis was known for his love of animals and uncanny ability to connect with them. It is said that he treated animals with the utmost respect, love, and care. Legend has it that St. Francis even preached to the animals about God's love and concern for them!

While I love animals in general, I never used to understand people's slightly fanatical obsession of their pets. It seemed a bit weird to have so much attachment over a random animal that had been purchased and introduced to live in your home. Then my parents got a puppy- and I fell in love.

When our puppy was really little, her paws were still too big for her and she staggered around the house like an unsteady little polar bear. Even so, every morning she was there to greet me, boundless excitement on her hind legs and a tail that wouldn't keep still.

All she wanted was to be picked up and cuddled. She loved to fall asleep on my lap and be tickled.

To me, my puppy was perfect. Not because she was physically perfect- her fur got matted easily, she barked too much when she saw another dog and she saw obedience as optional. But these things were tiny in comparison to how I felt about her. She regularly delighted me and I had been known to lie on the floor next to her and gaze into her eyes while she placed her paw on my hand. When I looked at her I didn't wish that she was a better or a smarter dog. What did it matter when she was perfect as she was? I didn't look at her and tell her I wished she was something else, like a bigger stronger dog, that would definitely be more useful using her for security. I didn't wish that she was a mountain rescue dog who could be a hero in an emergency. I didn't laugh at her when she forgot her size and tried to take on the bigger dogs at the park. I didn't look at her fur and wish it was easier to manage. I just loved her because she was *her*.

As for her, she seemed pretty content with her lot. The way she trusted us implicitly was fascinating. Lying on her back in the sunshine, completely vulnerable with her tummy exposed, eyes closed, she looked for all the world at peace with everything. She delighted in everything; boundless joy lighting up her whole being as she ran laps around the garden. She loved everything and everyone.

So where am I going with all this? It struck me that how I saw our puppy is a tiny and inadequate and incomplete example of how God sees us. When God looks at me, He does not wish, as I sometimes wish, that I was taller, smarter, or more handsome. He does not think I would be more useful as someone else, or doing something else. He doesn't think I'd be better off more intelligent or funnier or more confident. He doesn't laugh at me when I attempt things and fail at them. He doesn't wish I was easier to deal with. He loves me. And it's that simple.

I envied our puppy's complete abandonment to trust in us. It reminds me of how we should trust God.

I know I won't be the only one who has learnt amazing things from their pets, dogs, cats or otherwise. They are a gift to us in their trust, companionship, simplicity and love. They are also a gift to us in the parallels that they show between us and God. God knows our frailties, weaknesses and how we are only human but loves us all the same and strives to teach us and guide us in the right way. We know the limitations that animals have, but we have the honor of caring for them and being patient with them all the same.

I think that, with this in mind, it is a wonderful thing that we offer a “Blessing of the Animals” service on and around the Feast Day of St Francis. It may seem surprising that animals can be blessed, but in the same way that we say “God bless you” when someone sneezes, when we say Grace before meals in order to bless our food, we can certainly bless something as significant as the beloved animals in our lives.

Please join us at the outside Altar for our annual blessing of the pets on, October 8, at 10:30 a.m.

Blessing of the Pets

October 8, 2023

10:30 a.m.

Join us in The Chapel of the Holy Lawn Chairs (the outside Altar)

Bring a Pet and Bring a Friend!

Consecration Sunday Is Coming!

Congregations that approach financial stewardship from a biblical perspective do not view the money Christians give to their church merely as a way to pay its bills. Rather, such congregations see financial contributions as a way to help people grow spiritually in their relationship with God by supporting their church’s mission and ministry with a percentage of their incomes.

Our congregation’s finance committee has selected the *Consecration Sunday Stewardship Program* as a way to teach the biblical and spiritual principles of generous giving in our stewardship education emphasis this year.

Consecration Sunday is based on the biblical philosophy of the need of the giver to give for his or her own spiritual development, rather than on the need of the church to receive. Instead of treating people like members of a social club who should pay dues, we will treat people like followers of Jesus Christ who want to give unselfishly as an

act of discipleship. *Consecration Sunday* encourages people toward proportionate and systematic giving in response to the question, “What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?”

During morning worship on Consecration Sunday, we are asking our attendees and members to make their financial commitments to our church’s missionary, benevolent, and educational ministries in this community and around the world.

Every attendee and member who completes an *Estimate of Giving Card* does so voluntarily by attending morning worship on Consecration Sunday. We urge people to attend who feel strongly opposed to completing a card. The procedure is done in such a way that no one feels personal embarrassment if he or she chooses not to fill out a card.

We will do no home solicitation to ask people to complete cards. During morning worship our guest leader will conduct a brief period of instruction and inspiration, climaxed by members making their commitments as a confidential act of worship.

We will encourage participation in Consecration Sunday events through the Consecration Sunday

team and governing board members. Since we will make no follow-up visits to ask people to complete their cards, we will make every effort to inform, inspire, and commit everyone to attend Consecration Sunday worship.

Thanks in advance for your enthusiastic participation in Consecration Sunday events. +

Who was St. Francis?

Francis of Assisi was born c. 1181, one of the children of an Italian father, Pietro di Bernardone dei Moriconi, a prosperous silk merchant, and a French mother, Pica di Bourlemont, about whom little is known except that she was a noblewoman originally from Provence.

Indulged by his parents, Francis lived the high-spirited life typical of a wealthy young man. As a youth, Francis became a devotee of troubadours and was fascinated with all things Transalpine. He was handsome, witty, gallant, and delighted in fine clothes. He spent money lavishly. Although many hagiographers remark about his bright clothing, rich friends, and love of pleasures, his displays of disillusionment toward the world that surrounded him came fairly early in his life, as is shown in the "story of the beggar". In this account, he was selling cloth and velvet in the marketplace on behalf of his father when a beggar came to him and asked for alms. At the conclusion of his business deal, Francis abandoned his wares and ran after the beggar. When he found him, Francis gave the man everything he had in his pockets. His friends mocked him for his charity; his father scolded him in rage.

Around 1202, he joined a military expedition against Perugia and was taken as a prisoner at Collestrada. He spent a year as a captive, during which an illness caused him to re-evaluate his life. However, upon his return to Assisi in 1203, Francis returned to his carefree life. In 1205, Francis left for Apulia to enlist in the army of Walter III, Count of Brienne. A strange vision made him return to Assisi and lose interest in the worldly life. According to

hagiographic accounts, thereafter he began to avoid the sports and feasts of his former companions. A friend asked him whether he was thinking of marrying, to which he answered: "Yes, a fairer bride than any of you have ever seen", meaning his "Lady Poverty".

On a pilgrimage to Rome, he joined the poor in begging at St. Peter's Basilica. He spent some time in lonely places, asking God for spiritual enlightenment. He said he had a mystical vision of Jesus Christ in the forsaken country chapel of San Damiano, just outside Assisi, in which the Icon of Christ Crucified said to him, "Francis, Francis, go and repair My church which, as you can see, is falling into ruins." He took this to mean the ruined church in which he was presently praying, and so he sold some cloth from his father's store to assist the priest there.[16] When the priest refused to accept the ill-gotten gains, an indignant Francis threw the coins on the floor.



Pictured above is the Cross of San Damiano to which St. Francis prayed and received his vision to rebuild the church.

In order to avoid his father's wrath, Francis hid in a cave near San Damiano for about a month. When he returned to town, hungry and dirty, he was dragged home by his father, beaten, bound, and locked in a small storeroom. Freed by his mother during Bernardone's absence, Francis returned at once to San Damiano, where he found shelter with the officiating priest, but he was soon cited before the city consuls by his father. The latter, not content with having recovered the scattered gold from San Damiano, sought also to force his son to forego his inheritance by way of restitution. In the midst of legal proceedings before the Bishop of Assisi, Francis renounced his father and his patrimony. Some accounts report that he stripped himself naked in token of this renunciation, and the bishop covered him with his own cloak.

For the next couple of months, Francis wandered as a beggar in the hills behind Assisi. He spent some time at a neighboring monastery working as a scullion. He then went to Gubbio, where a friend gave him, as an alms, the cloak, girdle, and staff of a pilgrim. Returning to Assisi, he traversed the city, begging stones for the restoration of St. Damiano's. These he carried to the old chapel, set in place himself, and so at length rebuilt it. Over the course of two years, he embraced the life of a penitent, during which he restored several ruined chapels in the countryside around Assisi, among them San Pietro in Spina (in the area of San Petignano in the valley about a kilometer from Rivotorto, today on private property and once again in ruin); and the Porziuncola, the little chapel of St. Mary of the Angels in the plain just below the town. This later became his favorite abode. By degrees, he took to nursing lepers, in the lazar houses near Assisi. +

**Helping Hand
In-Gathering
Sunday, October 1**

Buy some extra groceries for those in need. They will be blessed and sent to be a blessing.

Upcoming Events

October 1:	Helping Hand In-Gathering
October 5:	5:30 p.m. Parish Game Night
October 7:	(Camp Capers) A Farewell to Bishop Reed)
October 8:	10:30 a.m. Blessing of the Pets
October 15:	11:45 a.m. Vestry Meeting
October 29:	Feast of All Souls'
October 31:	10:30 a.m. Outreach Meeting

Outreach Spotlight

BILL DAVIDSON

The outreach committee supports several organizations in the community of Bandera and one that has been supported from the beginning is Bandera County 4-H. The 4-H has many different programs that help young people to get involved in several different areas to learn skills that will help them in their adult life as well as deciding what fields they might want to pursue when deciding their college major.

Just a brief list of things that they teach in 4-H include Livestock projects such as participating at livestock show around Texas and along with that includes a livestock judging program. They also have a Veterinary Science Program for those who might want to pursue a degree in that area. This includes a program for Livestock Judging also.

Other programs that they teach are Fashion and Interior Design, Leadership Programs, Food and

Nutrition which covers food safety, practicing ways to prepare foods, prepare recipes and some go on to participate in food shows where they are interviewed by judges about the preparation, ingredients and their recipes, which also adds interview skills to this program.

Another area deals with music and theater which a group won state on there skit last year.

4-H has many other programs that prepare young people for their adult life, so the donation that we give enables the Bandera County 4-H to fund these projects that are so important for the students as they are being prepared for the future.

Join us for

Parish Game Night!

**Thursday, October 5, 5:30
p.m.**

Join us for dinner and an evening of fun!

Are you a board game fan?
Charades?

Something else equally fun?

Join us and game on!

“They gathered together for the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, for the breaking of bread, and the prayers.”

Acts 2:42

Server Schedules

8:30 a.m.

DATE	LECTOR	CHALICE
1		
8		
15		
22		
29		

10:30 a.m.

DATE	LECTOR	CHALICE
1		
8		
15		
22		
29		

Seasons of the Soul: How the Trees Teach Us to Let Go and Grow

BY DR. AHRIANA PLATTEN

Autumn is upon us—a time of self-reflection and release.

The season turns nature into a canvas, painting itself in hues of amber, ruby, and gold. Every year, I find myself sitting on my front porch, watching the leaves dance to the ground, captivated by their whispering encouragement to welcome change.

Trees Don’t Cling, So Why Should We?

Science offers a straightforward explanation for the transformative beauty of autumn leaves. During summer, trees are full of chlorophyll, the pigment that makes leaves green and aids in **photosynthesis**—the process of turning sunlight into energy. As the days of autumn shorten, the production of chlorophyll diminishes, revealing yellows, oranges, and reds. It’s a time to

show our true colors—at least to ourselves. **Self-reflection** and introspection seem to come naturally, and if we're courageous, it's a time when we can take a deep dive into our souls.

Each leaf will eventually fall, guided by tiny cells that help the tree sever its ties, allowing it to conserve energy and water. It's nature's poignant way of saying that sometimes, letting go is a necessary step in the cycle of life. As a rule, this doesn't happen all at once—although there is one tree in our yard that seems to drop the majority of its leaves almost overnight. Usually, each leaf is released in its own time, and there are a few that appear committed to clinging on through the winter!

Thoughts about what the world expects from us. Beliefs about what is lovable and what is not. Core perspectives that we've adopted as our own may now do more harm than good. Fall is the perfect time to reflect on these ideas and let go of the ones that no longer feel authentic or true.

There was a period when certain viewpoints shaped my identity and choices. They were my emotional and spiritual chlorophyll. But life has its seasons, and as I encountered new experiences, challenges, and people, I found that some of my old beliefs began to lose their relevance and usefulness. It was uncomfortable and even painful at times, but it allowed other colors—new perspectives and values—to come into view. And you know what? This newly revealed palette was breathtaking in its own right.

What Happens When We Hold On Too Tightly?

Just as leaves retained by a tree become a burden in the winter, our outdated ideas can transform into liabilities rather than assets. Clinging to them can block out new possibilities and cloud our judgment. You risk draining your spirit when you hold onto what needs to be released.

Cyclically, trees lose their leaves, endure the harsh winter, and then, come spring, they sprout anew. In the same way, our lives are marked by seasons of growth, change, and renewal. The ideas and beliefs

we let go of make room for new ways of being and for a fresh bloom of identity and purpose.

Around the Diocese

You're Invited to Celebrate the Rt. Rev. David M. and Patti Reed at Camp Capers

It's time for a County Fair Church Picnic Saturday, October 7 at Camp Capers! The Bishops' Transition Committee is excited to invite everyone in the Diocese of West Texas to celebrate the shared ministry of the Rt. Rev. David M. and Patti Reed. There is no cost to attend, so join us to celebrate Bishop David and Patti at this festival of fun and food for friends of all ages!

Bring your family and friends to Camp Capers for a one-day festival beginning with barbecue lunch at noon, followed by a piñata, Cake Walk, games, and county fair fun on the lawn. Don't worry about missing the Texas v. OU game; we'll have the game streaming on the big screen! The festivities will wrap up with a Closing Service in the St. Francis Chapel, a special Ground Breaking Ceremony for the chapel, and Prayers of Thanksgiving for the Reeds.

The chapel renovation, announced earlier this year, will be a gift to honor Bishop David M. and Patti Reed's wonderful, life-giving ministry to the diocese. Construction will begin at a later date, following the conclusion of the giving campaign. The renovated chapel will seat more than 200 worshipers comfortably, while maintaining the character and feel of the existing building. Expanding the St. Francis Chapel allows Camp Capers to live into its potential by serving people with grace and providing a special place for future generations.

Give a gift of gratitude for Bishop David & Patti Reed to the St. Francis Chapel Renovation. Text "chapel" to (210) 796-6805, give online, or mail a check to the diocesan office to join this expression of love and gratitude.

Cakes and Pies Needed: Calling all bakers! Bring your favorite cake or pie to Camp Capers for the Cake Walk, featuring tasty treats from kitchens across the diocese. Each item should have an index card listing the type of cake, your name and church, and any common allergens or special details (nuts, gluten-free, etc) about the cake.

Share your Favorite Photo: A picture is worth a thousand words. Click here to submit your favorite photos with Bishop Reed and Patti from any era of their ministry to be included in a slideshow presentation.

RSVP for the County Fair Church Picnic to help the Committee and Camp Capers staff plan the best party ever! Click here to save the printable event flyer and invite your friends to the County Fair Church Picnic at Camp Capers.

Can't make the County Fair Church Picnic? Save the date for an Evening Fiesta at St. Alban's, Harlingen: November 4.

Cursillo #289 at Mustang Island Conference Center: October 5-8

Rectora Michelle Little from Holy Spirit, San Antonio, will serve as the lay rector, the Rev. Phil Mason will serve as spiritual director, and the Rev. Andrew Green as assistant spiritual director for Cursillo #289 at Mustang Island Conference Center, October 5 - 8. This "short course" in Christian life is a four-day retreat for adults that aims to create disciples empowered and strengthened through prayer, sacraments, study, and community.

"Forgiving Oneself" - Spiritual Retreat in Recovery #120: October 13 - 15

Join the Rev. Keith Davis, Associate Rector of St. George, San Antonio and the Rev. Mikel Brightman, Rector of St. Philip's, San Antonio, at Mustang Island Conference Center for Spiritual Retreat in Recovery #120: "Forgiving Oneself." Onsite services, topical spiritual insight, and pastoral care are provided. In addition to break-out sessions, ample time is set aside for individual



Our very own Tom Lee won a prize at The Diocese of West Texas' annual Fishin' for Mission Event. And that's not a fish tale!

exploration. All friends in recovery are welcome; no church affiliation is required.

An Evening with the Rev. Canon Chuck Robertson: October 19

RSVP today for an Evening with the Rev. Canon Chuck Robertson October 19 at 6:00 p.m., hosted at St. George Episcopal Church in San Antonio. Following dinner, Robertson will share about his involvement in global ministry beyond The Episcopal Church and a silent auction will be held benefiting World Missions.