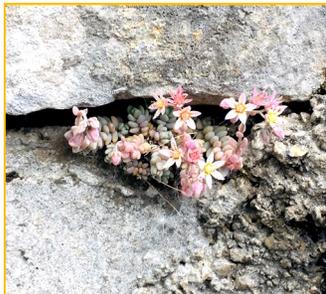


# THE PILGRIM'S COMPANION: SHARING THE FRANCISCAN JOURNEY

JANUARY 2022



Flowers on the Greccio wall  
Rebecca Coleman

He  
has made  
everything  
beautiful  
in its  
time.

He  
has  
set  
eternity  
into  
their  
hearts.

Ecclesiastes 3:11



## [Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs](#)



### Upcoming:

Looking for an additional Franciscan connection? Join next month's reflection writer Darleen Pryds for her online presentation:

[2022 Duns Scotus Lecture: "Laity as Co-Creators of the Franciscan Tradition"](#)

Greetings pilgrims.

Welcome to 2022 and the new year's edition of the Pilgrim's Companion newsletter. As you know, each month our goal is to provide a contemplative moment in your inbox.

I thank pilgrim Rebecca Coleman for contributing this month's reflection. Her writing centers on two images from her pilgrim journey. These images have settled in her heart and have become part of the path to relationship with God, and to transformative change within and through that loving relationship.

While I frequently call the page two writing a reflection, Rebecca called her writing a devotion. What a transformative word that is. It contains attentiveness, dedication, prayer, love. How often we see devotion in how St. Francis and St. Clare approached all of creation. In St. Francis, we see that level of intimacy with each Gospel reading, bird and blade of grass. We can see devotional attention and the transformational nature of it as he gazes at the cross of San Damiano. By being attentive and giving space for solitude, he met the Divine Solitude. He actively loved what he saw and grew in relation to Love.

St. Clare's words, "gaze, consider, contemplate, imitate," reveal her understanding of the transformative nature of taking a moment to deeply see—and in living one's response. We see her spirit-filled actions in the love of her sisters and the loving, firm commitment and care with which she lives the Franciscan ideal amidst times of gladness and times of difficulty and division.

As Rebecca notes, we may not see the path clearly, but "God's manifestation in life awakens an awareness of His continual presence, which gives courage to continue the journey." She sent her devotional writing with "a prayer of hope, resilience, and peace to all who read it."

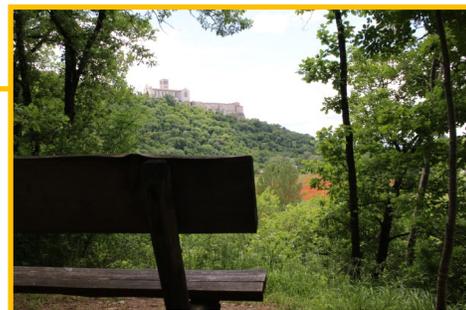
May you walk in Peace and Good,

-Mary Beth

Mary Beth Wisniewski

AFCU Outreach—Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs

Along the pilgrim journey, we all have moments and images that remain with us. They become touchstones and teachers. Sometimes we can put words to our thoughts and sometimes these pilgrim moments, and other moments we take time to see, are filled with the ineffable. Our response cannot be spoken—only lived.



As we begin the new year, take time to consider an image that has stayed with you.

Take a moment to gaze, consider, contemplate...

What arises for you?

What questions do you have of God?

What do you notice in the silence of your heart?

How might you live a response?

# THE PILGRIM'S COMPANION: SHARING THE FRANCISCAN JOURNEY

## A New Year with Renewed Hope for Resilience and Peace

By Rebecca Coleman

The memories from my Assisi pilgrimages deeply resonate within my being and continually shape my life's journey. My experiences in God's creation linger throughout my times of reflection. Two of those moments include a walk on a path in the wooded area of the Carceri and the stone walkway leading to the Nativity chapel in Greccio.

My walk through the woods at the Carceri occurred on cool, damp, foggy day. The path was visible for a short distance. The trees and flowers along the trail were beautiful but only visible within short distance. While on my walk, my thoughts focused on the immediate images in front me while raising uncertainty about where I was going. The uncertainty was unsettling because the journey became unpredictable.

My second experience with God's creation involved a walkway to the Nativity chapel at Greccio. The steep incline of the walkway was composed of gray-colored stones. Toward the top of the walkway was a drab stone wall with a small bunch of flowers growing through the cracks. I wondered how beautiful, tender flowers could grow through the cracks of a gray, cold stone wall.



The images of these two pilgrim memories guide my times of reflection in which several themes continually emerge. One is a theme of hope; the others are of resilience and peace. My desire is to share a devotion about how my Carceri and Greccio experiences within God's creation create hope, resilience, and peace. In order to do so, our discussion focuses on the Four Rs: realness, readiness, restoration, and resiliency.

### Realness

My journey on the foggy path at the Carceri created a reality of uncertainty and anxiety. Although my comfort came from the visible trees, flowers, and path in my immediate presence, my discomfort developed from not knowing what laid ahead on the foggy path. This experience continues to teach me how to accept the uncertainties and fears of reality while trusting my immediate connections with God through His creation. God's manifestation in my life awakens an awareness of His continual presence, which gives courage to continue the journey along the foggy path.

### Readiness

Acceptance of reality creates a readiness for transformation. Transformative change is difficult, but the Christmas story offers two thoughts of hope. The incarnation of Jesus told through the live Nativity at Greccio offers a visible reality. If Jesus came to earth in human form, then He willingly meets me where I am. He is my Immanuel and walks with me every stop of my journey – even if the path is foggy and uncertain.

### Restoration

Readiness for transformation leads to restoration of relationships with God, others, and creation. Healing and reconciliation occur when His love, grace, and mercy toward me reflect how my actions should be toward all people and the world. In turn, my relationships are further restored when my responses are with a grateful, compassionate, empathetic, gentle, and forgiving spirit (Colossians 3: 12 – 15). When my focus is on God's unconditional love, then His peace rules in my heart, guides my life's journey, and restores relationships (Colossians 3:16).

### Resiliency

Restoration offers hope for resiliency. No matter what occurs in life, my hope lies in God's continual presence. Just like the flowers growing through the stone wall on the walkway to Greccio, God provides for new life to emerge in the most unlikely situations.

In closing, I pray the memories from your Assisi pilgrimages bring hope for the new year. May God's transformative love offer peace and resiliency as you continue your life journey. Pax et bonum, my fellow pilgrims!

