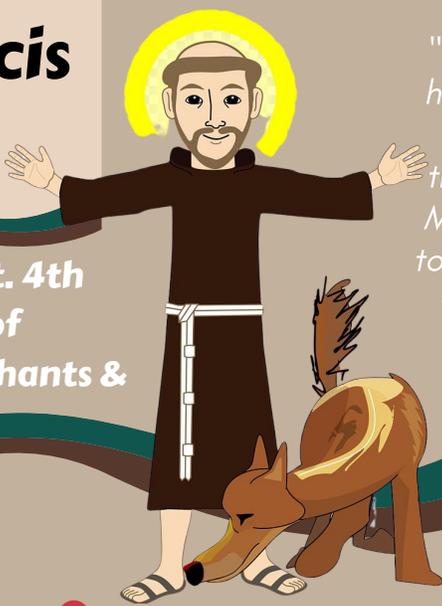


St. Francis of Assisi

Feast Day: Oct. 4th
Patron Saint of
Animals, Merchants &
Ecology



"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

Francis was born in Italy in 1181 to a wealthy merchant family. As a young man, he spent a lot of time and money on parties, clothes, and activities.



When he was 20, he wanted to be a great soldier and joined an army but was soon captured. When he was finally released he tried to join again but a dream convinced him to return home and seek God's plan for his life.

Francis spent time in prayer, wandered through the countryside and gave his belongings to the poor. His friends thought he was crazy, but Francis discovered the beauty of God's creation.



While praying in an abandoned church in San Damiano, he heard Jesus asking him to rebuild His Church.



His joy attracted others and so he started the Friars Minor (Franciscans) who go everywhere preaching the Gospel and live very simply so they can live like Jesus.

Even though Francis was very poor, he was filled with joy and loved serving God. He knew God wanted him to rebuild the Church by telling people about Jesus.

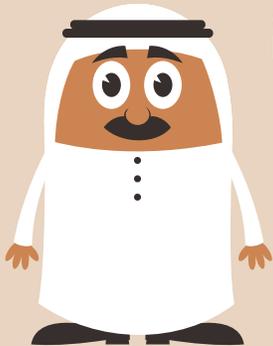


He sold his father's cloth for money to rebuild the church. His father was angry and demanded that he pay it back. Francis renounced his inheritance and rebuilt the church through begging for supplies.



Francis wanted official approval for his group of brothers, so he went to Rome to see Pope Innocent III. The Pope had a dream about a poor man who would help save the Church, so he gave Francis his blessing to preach and spread his group.

When a woman named Clare of Assisi wanted to take similar vows, Francis helped her start the Order of the Poor Ladies (Order of Saint Clare). The sisters lived simple lives of prayer and poverty.



Francis traveled to the Holy Land to share Christianity with the Muslim Sultan of Egypt. Francis' humility and respect impressed the Sultan and they had a peaceful meeting. The Sultan and Francis concluded their discussion by asking each other to pray for the other.

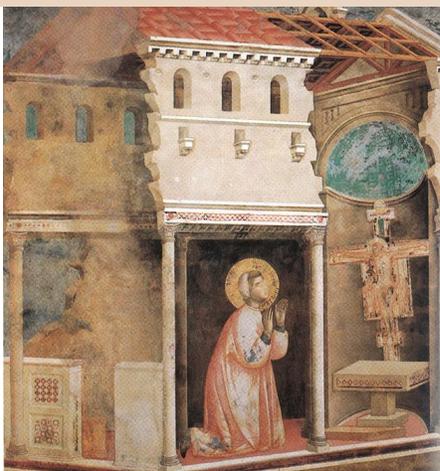


Francis died on Oct. 3, 1226 in Assisi, surrounded by his brother friars. His last words were from Psalm 142, "I cried to the Lord with my voice". Francis was canonized a saint two years later by Pope Gregory IX. A basilica was built in honor of St. Francis and his remains were moved there for veneration.

Two years before he died, Francis had a vision of Christ crucified. During this encounter, Francis received the stigmata, which is having Christ's wounds on your own body. Since Francis loved Jesus so much and wanted to be like Him, he was happy to share in Christ's suffering.



Francis set up the first known Nativity scene to celebrate Christmas. He arranged everything in a cave in Italy, using a live ox and donkey along with a manger full of hay. He invited people to ponder the scene as he preached about Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem.



The Prayer before the Crucifix by St. Francis of Assisi
Most High, glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart
and give me
true faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
Lord, that I may carry out
Your holy and true command. Amen.

*Created by Joan Patten
 Pro Sanctity Movement*