

St Francis of Assisi

Feast Day - October 4, 2015



Saint Francis of Assisi

Biography:

Saint Francis of Assisi was a Catholic friar who gave up a life of wealth to live a life of poverty. He established the Franciscan Order of friars and the women's Order of the Poor Ladies.

Early Life

Francis was born in Assisi, Italy in 1182. He grew up leading a privileged life as the son of a wealthy cloth merchant. Francis loved to learn and sing songs as a boy. His father wanted him to become a businessman and taught him about the French culture.

Going to Battle

About the age of nineteen Francis went to battle against the nearby town of Perugia. Francis was captured and taken prisoner. He was held prisoner in a dungeon for a year before his father paid the ransom and he was set free.

Visions from God

Over the next few years Francis began to see visions from God that changed his life. The first vision was when he was sick with a high fever. At first he thought that God had called him to fight in the Crusades. However, he had another vision that told him to help the sick. Finally, when praying in a church, Francis heard God tell him to "repair my church, which is falling in ruins."

Francis gave all his money to the church. His father became very angry with him. Francis then left his father's home and took a vow of poverty.

The Franciscan Order

As Francis lived his life of poverty and preached to people about the life of Jesus Christ, people began to follow him. By 1209, he had around 11 followers. He had one basic rule which was "To follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in his footsteps". Francis was a devoted follower of the Catholic Church. He and his followers travelled to Rome to get the approval for their religious Order from the pope. At first the pope was reluctant. These men were dirty, poor, and smelled bad. However, eventually he understood their vow of poverty and blessed the Order.

Other Orders

The Franciscan Order grew as men joined and made vows of poverty. 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). He also started another order (later called the Third Order of Saint Francis) that was for men and women who didn't take vows or leave their jobs, but lived out the principals of the Franciscan Order in their daily lives.

Love for Nature

Francis was known for his love of nature and animals. There are many stories about Saint Francis and his preaching to animals. It is said that one day he was talking to some birds when they began to sing together. Then they flew into the sky and formed the sign of a cross.

It was also said that Francis could tame wild animals. One story tells of a vicious wolf in the town of Gubbio that was killing people and sheep. The people of the town were frightened and didn't know what to do. Francis went to the town to confront the wolf. At first the wolf growled at Francis and prepared to attack him. However, Francis made the sign of the cross and told the wolf not to hurt anyone else. The wolf then became tame and the town was safe.

Death

Francis became ill and spent the last few years of his life mostly blind. He died in 1226 while singing Psalm 141. He was declared a saint of the Catholic Church only two years after his death.

Interesting Facts about Saint Francis of Assisi

- October 4th is observed as Saint Francis feast day.
- It is said that he received the stigmata two years before he died. This was the wounds of Christ from the cross including his hands, feet, and side.
- Francis travelled to the Holy Lands during the Crusades hoping to conquer the Muslims with love rather than war.
- Francis set up the first known Nativity scene to celebrate Christmas in 1220.
- He believed that actions were the best example, telling his followers to "Preach Gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

Source: http://www.ducksters.com/history/middle_ages/saint_francis_of_assisi.php

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Pope Francis ' Viewpoints on the Environment

"It means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about," he said in the homily of his inaugural Mass.

Francis, the former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina, took his name in honour of St. Francis of Assisi, a symbol of poverty, charity and love of nature.

(Brazil) In a separate speech to bishops, the pope called for "respect and protection of the entire creation which God has entrusted to man, not so that it be indiscriminately exploited but rather made into a garden."

He also urged attention to a 2007 document by Latin American and Caribbean bishops that he was in charge of drafting, which underscored dangers facing the Amazon environment and the native people living there. The document also called for new evangelization efforts to halt a steep decline in Catholics leaving for other faiths or secularism.

"The traditional communities have been practically excluded from decisions on the wealth of biodiversity and nature. Nature has been, and continues to be, assaulted," the document reads.

But let's look at what Francis actually said so far on the environment.

1. [Address to the media:](#)

Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation; these days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we? He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man ... How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor!

2. [Inauguration Mass](#) (creation mentioned 6 times, environment twice):

The vocation of being a "protector", however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live....

Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be "protectors" of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.

3. [Audience with religious leaders](#) of other faiths:

The Church is likewise conscious of the responsibility which all of us have for our world, for the whole of creation, which we must love and protect. There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy and those who suffer, and to favour justice, promote reconciliation and build peace....

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Is "Green" a Christian Position?

by Fr. Richard Rohr

Creation still retains the hope of being freed, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God. —Romans 8:21

It is strange that two thousand years after Christians believed that the Eternal Word became 'matter' and lived among us (John 1:14), we would still need to justify or validate our love of the material world! Yet we do. After the Incarnation of God in Christ, our universe was supposed to be rearranged. The heavens were no longer to be seen as "up there," and we "down here." Henceforth, we were supposed to find ourselves *in* the heavens! In fact, that is the very point—if you are a recipient of "salvation."

Yet to this day, most Christians still live inside of a largely pagan cosmology (I mean that quite seriously). It is a telling window into the early stage development, and actual immaturity, of most organized Christianity. One would think that if there were any religion which would really reverence materiality, physicality, embodiment, sexuality, the history and structure of life itself, animal, water, and earth care—it would have been the Christian religion. But not so. Many scientists and doctors tend to do it much better, to be quite honest.

There are actually bishops, priests, and laity who think that concern for this world and this earth is pagan, New Age, trendy, or unnecessary, some kind of diversionary tactic from the real work of exclusively human salvation. From this viewpoint, we are about an “evacuation plan” for humans into the next world. We really have not been too concerned about helping to create the “New Earth” that the Bible promised us in its very final words (Revelation 21:1), or to protect the creation that the Bible starts by calling “very good” (Genesis 1:31). God saw it as inherently good; for some reason, we did not.

For many believers, “green” is not only *not* Christian, it is secular, silly, unneeded, and in actual competition with the Gospel. Their belief is only for the next world and never for this one, too. They live in a split universe and, for some narcissistic reason, believe they are the only creation that God cares about. Why would that be true? No wonder that the salvation we have offered people is so tiny and ineffective, and barely touches the surface of human and social transformation. No wonder we have been on the wrong side of most social revolutions until very recently.

The Jewish Scriptures were already more wholistic and inclusive than such supposed believers in the Incarnation. Listen to the three young men in the fiery furnace, a Canticle that we Franciscan friars chanted every Sunday and major feast day, but never seem to have comprehended. Below is only a small part of this joyous affirmation of all creation’s power to show forth salvation:

*Let the earth bless the Lord, praise and exalt God above all forever!
Mountains and hills, bless the Lord,
Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord,
You springs, bless the Lord,
Seas and rivers, bless the Lord,
You dolphins and all water creatures, bless the Lord,
All you birds of the air, bless the Lord,
All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord, praise and exalt God above all forever.*
—Daniel 3:74-81

How could we miss this central point so totally after Jesus himself told us to do God’s will “on earth as it is in heaven” in our primary spoken prayer, the “Our Father”? Buddhism does not believe that God entered our world and took on its clothing and disguise; neither does Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, or any of the other religions of the world. The consubstantial union between spirit and flesh is the unique doctrine of Christianity, and the very meaning of its living icon, Jesus. To believe in “the Christ” is to assert this radical union. It is our only real trump card, yet we have refused to play it. It is probably just too good to be true!

Walter Wink said many years ago that there are three basic world views, and then there is the Christian one:

1. The material world view: everything is matter and physical.
2. The spiritual world view: everything is spirit and consciousness.
The theological world view: the job of good people is to put matter and spirit together by effort, morality, and ritual, and thereby please God and change themselves into something holy

3. The incarnational world view: matter and spirit are already and always have been one. They are the two sides of the same coin. *We do not make it happen, we learn to see it everywhere and always. It is the Great Epiphany and the major meaning of conversion.* This is the real and only Christian position.

Clergy of all stripes seem to prefer the third “theological” worldview. It allows us priests and preachers to feel necessary and gives us a job to do. It keeps the laity running after the carrot on the stick, which we always hold out in front of them. But, less cynically, I think the Incarnational worldview demands some degree of inner experience of the same. You cannot just “get it” intellectually or as an abstract doctrine. You have to have had some level of unitive experience, God experience, or what many would call basic mysticism. Even nature mysticism or love mysticism are good starters. Once you have this experience, not only is the Green revolution not anti-Christian, or a nice parallel to Christianity, I think it is *the direct child of Christianity!* It is the Incarnation come to full unfolding, implication, and consciousness. Yes, of course, people are often involved for self-interested motivation, but does that make it wrong itself? We see in the Scriptures that Yahweh is quite willing to use Balaam’s ass, Cyrus the Persian, and unwilling prophets to do God’s holy will.

God is so humble and so patient that God does not wait until humans can develop pure and perfect motivation. *You do not need to believe in God to do God’s will or to give God glory.* Apparently Daniel is saying that dolphins, springs, and mountains are doing it quite well, and have been for millions and billions of years before we even showed up. Was God not glorified until we came? Was God not in love until we came? If so, God had nothing to do for at least 34 billion years.

I hope to develop this theme on more practical levels in the months and years ahead, but here I just want to lay the theological foundation, and let you absorb it—and enjoy it—before we go further. It is a major paradigm shift for most Western and cultural Christians. Listen to the wisdom of Solomon:

How dull are all people who, from the things-that-are, have not been able to discover He-Who-Is, or by studying the good works have failed to recognize the Artist. . . .Through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures, we may by analogy, contemplate their Author. —Wisdom 13:1, 5

In other words, matter is the outer form and spirit is the inner source of everything we know and see. Today quantum physics, astronomers, and molecular biologists seem to be discovering the same thing, but from completely different starting points. Paul said the same. He knew his Scriptures from Genesis to the Book of Wisdom to the prophet Daniel. It is time for us to *believe* as widely and deeply and completely as he did. And remember that Paul only articulated what Jesus had already lived by action and lifestyle:

Ever since God created the world, his everlasting power and deity—however invisible—have been there for the mind to see in the things that God has made. —Romans 1:20

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Celebrate St Francis Of Assisi Day - Possible activities ...

Whole School Liturgy – blessings of animals, earth, plants..

1

- † Share the story of St Francis of Assisi.
- † Students re-enact the story of St Francis of Assisi through Godly Play.
- † What would have St Francis' house and farm been like? (Y Chart to display)
- † What was Italy like in the 12 Century compared with what Australia looked like?
- † Locate where St Francis of Assisi lived on a map.
- † Look at Giotto's paintings of St Francis of Assisi.

2

- † Incursion – RSPCA or pets, or a Management Group or a Local Farmer
- † Gallery Walk – photos of students with their pets (need to link as a pre- work homework activity)
- † Dress in brown, simple clothes like St Francis of Assisi.
- † Workshop around items that represent what St Francis of Assisi would have eaten, the people he knew, where he lived, landscapes, times..

3

- † Pre Activity – Read a picture story of St Francis of Assisi – use images/photos of around your school/town to retell the story.
- † Design a reflective space based on the life of St Francis of Assisi and his love of animals.
- † Design a fabric Labyrinth.
- † St Francis of Assisi's motto was 'Actions Before Words'. Prepare a liturgy around this motto. What can we do to make this more sustainable in our community?
- † Use the iPads to visit the Cool Australia website, selecting relevant Biodiversity images for: - Learning Centres (Picture Chat) - Writing Centres (Writing Prompts) *Ten*

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A Resource List : Compiled by Kate Lawry -
Religious Education Resource Centre

Commandments for the environment t: Pope Benedict XVI speaks out for creation and justice by Woodeene Koenig-Bricker

The teaching on creation and environmental responsibility by 'The Green Pope', with a collection of quotes and theological reflections such as, the preface for 'Commandment ten: It's all a gift':
A spiritual response must be given to environmental questions, inspired by the conviction that creation is a gift that God has placed in the hands of mankind, to be used responsibly and with loving care.

Francis ; the journey and the dream by Murray Bodo
This text has been described as 'the favourite book' about St Francis!

The gift of Saint Francis by John Davis and Don McMonigle, illustrations by Lynne Muir
The authors and illustrators reveal the legacy of St Francis in stories, prayer and pilgrimage.

Jesus and the natural world : exploring a Christian approach to ecology by Denis Edwards
Biodiversity & ecology : an interdisciplinary challenge Edited by Denis Edwards and Mark Worthing

PRAYER FOCUS

Aspects of the heart : the many path ways to a good life by Joan Chittister
Heartlines : prayer resources for a contemporary spirituality (revised and updated 2013) edited by Maurice Ryan
Finding your hidden treasure By Benignus O'Rourke

JOURNALS

Resurgence & Ecologist : environment, activism, social justice, arts, ethical living published by The Resurgence Trust, UK
Earthsong : ecology, spirituality and education published by Earthsong Project, Australia

AUDIO CDs

Following the path : the search for a life of passion, purpose and joy by Joan Chittister

MUSIC CDs

Ultimate chant : music of ethereal beauty
Gurrumul : Rrakala Winanjara : the song peoples sessions by Warren H Williams and the Warumungu Songmen
Simply Gregorian : 4 cd's of haunting songs and melodies

DVDs

Francis of Assisi

Assisi Pilgrimage : walking in faith with Francis and Clare

Brother Sun, Sister Moon

The Man Who Planted Trees

How Beautiful On The Mountains : Isaiah 52.7

Taize : that little springtime

Music for reflective prayer : calming instrumental music with restful images

Margaret Rizza - Her usic for joy : uplifting music and images

Themes for liturgy or reflection taken from prayers attributed to Saint Francis as presented in **Heartlines** edited by Maurice Ryan

RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS	Prayer of Praise (p 83) Song of Saint Francis of Assisi	Make me an instrument of your peace (p 37)	Brother Sun, Sister Moon ECOLOGY theme (p 143)
	<i>Images of God for young children</i> By Marie-Helene Delval	<i>Limpopo Lullaby</i> by Jane Jolly	<i>Canticle of the Sun</i> Illustrated by Fiona French
	<i>The Lion Classic : Prayer collection</i> written and compiled by Lois Rock	<i>To Everything</i> by Bob Barner	<i>Blessing of Animals</i> by Kevin E. Macklin www.americancatholic.org <i>Catholic Prayer : Saint Francis and the blessing of animals</i> www.catholicculture.org
	<i>The Everything Seed</i> by Carole Martignacco	<i>God's Quiet Things</i> by Nancy Sweetland	<i>For All Creatures</i> by Glenda Millard
	Sing a New Song : a book of Psalms	<i>Saints and Heroes video 3</i> DVD A John Powell Film	<i>I Wanted to Know All About God</i> By Virginia L. Kroll
	<i>YOUCAT : youth prayer book</i>	<i>The Secret of Happiness : the sermon on the mount for children</i> by Jan Godfrey	<i>Be Still : creation meditations</i> CD by Michael Mangan
	<i>Where The Sun Rises</i> by Jon Muth	<i>Stone Soup</i> by Jon Muth reimagined by Katherine Paterson	<i>Brother Sun, Sister Moon</i> DVD

	<i>At Break Of Day</i> by Nikki Grimes	<i>The Peaceable Forest : India's Kindness to animals</i> by Kosa Johansson	<i>Bible Birdies and Beasties</i> by Leena Lane
	<i>Why I Love Australia</i> by Bronwyn Bancroft	<i>Amelia smiled</i>	<i>The Lion Classic : Wisdom stories</i> by Mary Joslin
	<i>Ten Little Fingers and ten little toes</i> by Mem Fox	<i>Once There Was a Boy</i> by Dub Leffler	<i>Hello Baby</i> by Mem Fox
	<i>I Love A Sunburnt Country</i> by Dorothy McKellar	<i>Of Thee I Sing : a letter to my daughters</i> by Barack Obama	<i>Step Gently Out</i>
	<i>Learning Links to Saints and Heroes</i> by Michael Ryan	<i>Pardon, Peace and Stories of Reconciliation</i> DVD Franciscan Communications	<i>Brother Sun, Sister Moon</i>
	<i>The Conductor</i>	<i>Brother Francis presents the Rosary : a special way to pray</i> Animated DVD	<i>If You Hold a Seed</i> by Ella McKay
	<i>Glory</i> by Nancy Carlstrom		<i>The Prince of Butterflies</i> by Bruce Coville
	<i>Love Lives Again : stations of the Resurrection</i> DVD powerpoint presentation	<i>Orbit : Earth's Extraordinary Journey</i> DVD presented by Kate Humble and Dr Helen Czerski	<i>Mass of Creation</i> CD by Martyt Haugen
			<i>Tree of Life</i> CD by Marty Haugen and Marc Anderson
			<i>God of Surprises : new music for liturgy and prayer</i> by Michael Herry FMS
			<i>The Tree : a little story about big things</i> by Danny Ottley

			<i>Walk Lightly : songs inspired by Catholic Earthcare Australia By Louise Robards and Mark Rune</i>

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