

ST. FRANCIS SCHOOL, JASIDIH (JH047)
READ, REFLECT AND LEARN (QUIZ CONTEST)
PRIZES ARE AWAITING FOR YOU ALL (CLASSES IV, V & VI ONLY)

Nature and the environment

Francis preached the Christian doctrine that the world was created good and beautiful by God but suffers a need for redemption because of human sin. As someone who saw God reflected in nature, "St. Francis was a great lover of God's creation the Canticle of the Sun he gives God thanks for Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Water, Fire, and Earth, all of which he sees as rendering praise to God.

Many of the stories that surround the life of Francis say that he had a great love for animals and the environment. The Fioretti ("Little Flowers") is a collection of legends and folklore that sprang up after his death. One account describes how one day, while Francis was travelling with some companions, they happened upon a place in the road where birds filled the trees on either side. Francis told his companions to "wait for me while I go to preach to my sisters the birds. The birds surrounded him, intrigued by the power of his voice, and not one of them flew away. He is often portrayed with a bird, typically in his hand.

Another legend from the Fioretti tells that in the city of Gubbio, where Francis lived for some time, was a wolf "terrifying and ferocious, who devoured men as well as animals". Francis went up into the hills and when he found the wolf, he made the sign of the cross and commanded the wolf to come to him and hurt no one. Then Francis led the wolf into the town, and surrounded by startled citizens made a pact between them and the wolf. Because the wolf had "done evil out of hunger", the townsfolk were to feed the wolf regularly. In return, the wolf would no longer prey upon them or their flocks. In this manner Gubbio was freed from the menace of the predator.

Francis: The saint of ecology

On 29 November 1979, Pope John Paul II declared Francis the patron saint of ecology. On 28 March 1982, John Paul II said that Francis' love and care for creation was a challenge for contemporary Catholics and a reminder "not to behave like dissident predators where nature is concerned, but to assume responsibility for it, taking all care so that everything stays healthy and integrated, so as to offer a welcoming and friendly environment even to those who succeed us. The same Pope wrote on the occasion of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1990, that Francis "invited all of creation — animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon — to give honour and praise to the Lord. The poor man of Assisi gives us striking witness that when we are at peace with God, we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples. "

In 2015, Pope Francis published his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* about the ecological crisis and "care for our common home, which takes its name from the Canticle of the Sun, which Francis of Assisi composed. It presents Francis as "the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically". This inspired the birth of the *Laudato Si'* Movement, a global network of nearly 1000 organizations promoting the *Laudato Si'* message and the Franciscan approach to ecology.

It is a popular practice on his feast day, 4 October, for people to bring their pets and other animals to church for a blessing.

Canticle of the Sun

Most High, all powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour, and all blessing.

To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through which you give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth, who sustains us and governs us and who produces varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin. Blessed are those who will find Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.

Early life

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 purse. 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 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 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".

Francis's renunciation

Francis renounced worldly goods and family ties to embrace a life of poverty. He repaired the church of San Damiano, refurbished a chapel dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle and then restored the now-famous little chapel of St. Mary of the Angels (Santa Maria degli Angeli), the Porziuncola, on the plain below Assisi. There, on the feast of St. Matthias February 24, 1208, he listened at mass to the account of the mission of Christ to the Apostles from the Gospel According to Matthew (10: 7, 9-11): "And as you go, preach the message, 'The kingdom is at hand!' ..Take no gold, nor silver, nor money in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the labourer deserves his food. And whatever town or villa you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart." According to Thomas of Celano, this was the decisive moment for Francis, who declared, "This is what I wish; this is what I am seeking. This is what I want to do from the bottom of my heart." He then removed his shoes, discarded his staff, put on a rough tunic, and began to preach repentance.

Francis' Divine Illumination

On a pilgrimage to Rome, he joined the poor in begging at St. Peter's Basilica.[12] He spent some time in lonely places, asking God for divine illumination. 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. When the priest refused to accept the ill-gotten gains, an indignant Francis threw the coins on the floor.

For the next couple of months, Francis wandered as a beggar in the hills behind Assisi. He spent some time at a neighbouring 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. 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 kilometre 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 leper colonies near Assisi.