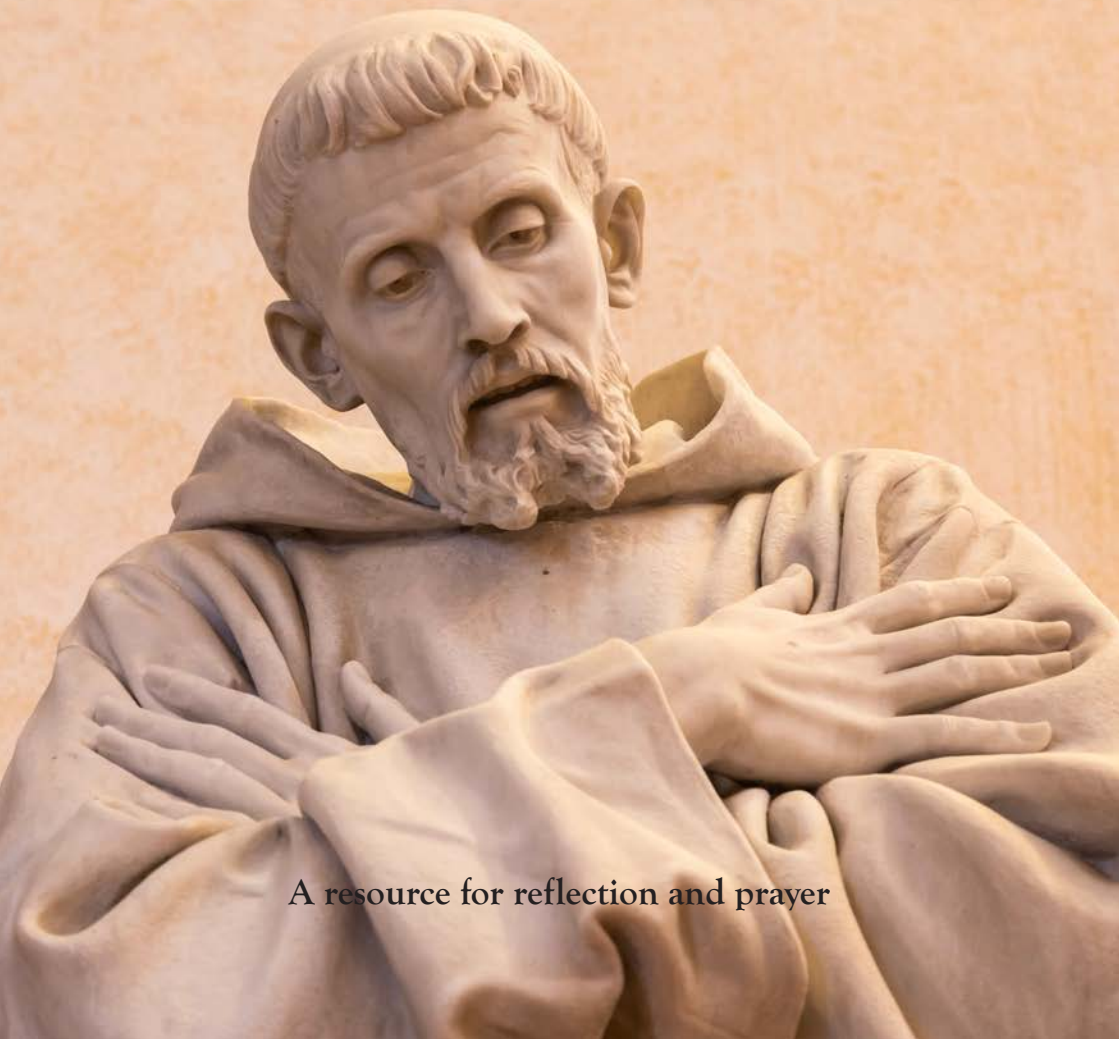


Jubilee Year of Saint Francis of Assisi

To honour the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo declared a special Jubilee 'Year of St Francis' in 2026, asking all Christians to follow St Francis' example in "holiness of life and a constant witness of peace." Apostolic Penitentiary, 2026

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

1182 – 1226



A resource for reflection and prayer



PRAYER OF POPE LEO XIV IN THIS YEAR OF GRACE

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace, intercede for us before the Lord.

You who recognised true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano, teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war and misunderstanding, give us the courage to build bridges where the world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division, intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers: unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ. Amen

Pope Leo XIV, *Letter to the Ministers General of the Conference of the Franciscan Family*, 2026





Saint Francis of Assisi

1182 – 1226

FRANCIS' LIFE PURPOSE

Jesus said to his disciples: “Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with a few coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the workman deserves his keep.” Matthew 10:9-10

FRANCIS' LIFE PURPOSE

Saint Francis of Assisi, born Geovanni di Pietro di Bernadone, was the beloved, some say spoiled, child of a prosperous merchant family of Assisi, Italy. He was a popular, carefree young man who liked a good time and dreamed of a military career, fame and fortune.

Full of hope and ambition, in 1202 aged 20, Francis joined a battle in his region, but defeat and a year in prison marked a new beginning for him. He tried to stay positive and befriended fellow prisoners, but became ill and despondent. A ransom was paid to free Francis, but recovery took a long time. He had time to reflect on his life and what his future could be. He couldn't go back to his earlier, carefree existence. In 1205 he went to war again. He was wearing shiny new armour that he swapped for that of a poor man. In a dream he was asked, "Who do you serve, the Master or the servant?" Francis said, "The Master!" He sensed this was God's voice. Francis returned home, confused about what he should do. He began spending time in hills, caves and ruined churches, praying for guidance.

Francis fell in love with God whom he saw in the beauty of creation. He grew to love the poor, in whom he recognised Christ's face. "Lady Poverty" was his companion. One day he was praying before the crucifix in the dilapidated church of San Damiano: A tender, compassionate voice then spoke to him: "Francis, do you not see that my house is falling into ruin? Go, and repair it for me." Trembling and amazed Francis replied: "Gladly I will do so, O Lord." (*Legend*, Ch V). A deep love for Christ crucified began that day. With money from his father's business, Francis started rebuilding churches. Later, he would realise his true calling was to rebuild the Church that was God's people.

Francis' father took his son, now aged 23, to court, demanding repayment of money used to repair St Damiano's. Francis agreed but, before horrified family and friends, renounced his inheritance and gave away his possessions, including clothes he was wearing. He became a beggar for food and stones to rebuild the churches of San Damiano, the Portiuncular ('Little Portion') and St Peter's. Others joined him and an informal community began to form.

On the feast of St Matthew, Francis listened, as if for the first time, to the story of Jesus sending his disciples out to share his mission:

"Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with a few coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the workman deserves his keep" (Matthew 10:9-10). Francis cried out, "This is what I want! This is what I want with all my heart." He knew what God was calling him to do.

A LEPER

It was during this time that Francis, who had previously avoided lepers, kissed one whom he met on the way. On remounting his horse, the leper could not be seen, but he had overcome his aversion to leprosy. Francis later said of this experience, "What had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation . . . After that I did not wait long before leaving the world." For Francis, leaving the world meant caring for lepers and praying in God's creation and deserted chapels. He saw Christ in the loneliness and poverty of the lepers. They were the poorest of the poor, living on the margins of Assisi society. (D. Runyan, Christian Spirituality Institute; *Legend*, Ch IV)

FRANCIS' WORDS

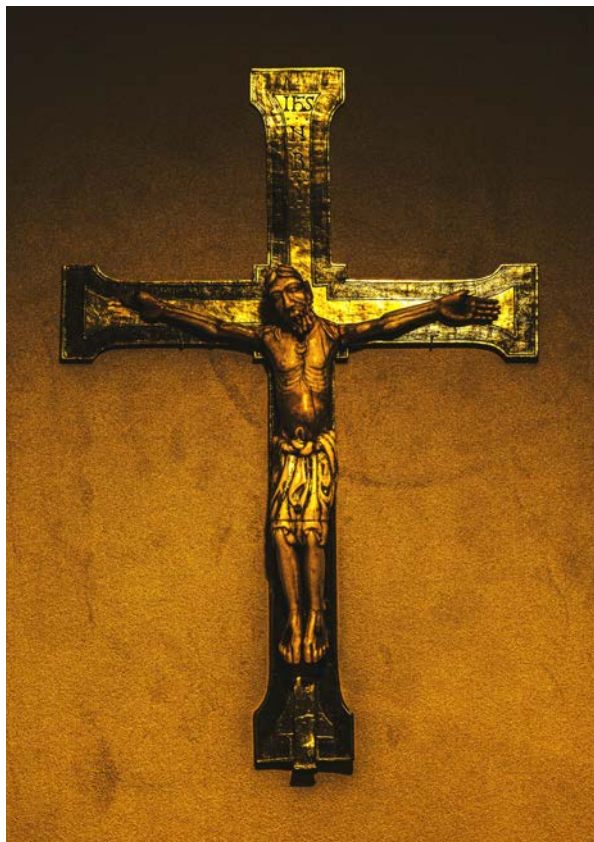
This is what I want! This is what I want with all my heart!

(St Francis in Bonaventure, *Life*, Ch 3, 1)

YOUR LIFE

“We also have conversion points in our lives. Initial conversion and ongoing conversion are processes taking many days, months, or years. But somewhere in most everyone’s spiritual conversion is a special point that is decisive above all others. It may come in a low point of crisis or at a point of ecstasy. But it will come. It changes us irrevocably. We drop all we have ever been, and become something new ... It may come as a call to marriage, clerical ordination, or celibate or marital consecration in a particular ministry or community ... It can come in all kinds of ways and to all kinds of callings from God. But it comes to all who give their lives to God in a serious way.” (J. M. Talbot, *Reflections*, 22)

- **What stands out as you read Francis’ story?**
- **Prayerful Remembering:** Allow 10-15 minutes in a quiet place. Ask for the Spirit’s guidance.
 - Have there been ‘conversion points’ in your life, when you became clearer about your faith, your life’s purpose or calling?
 - Sometimes a wise person may help us discern an authentic call from God. Has someone supported you this way?
 - **Pay attention** to what comes to mind as you remember and pray. **‘Listen’** with your heart.
- **Ask** for the gifts God’s Spirit wants to give you as you go forward.
- **Finish with a prayer of thanks.**
- **Writing:** You may want to write down thoughts or words from your prayer.



PRAYER BEFORE A CRUCIFIX

Most High glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart
and give me, Lord, correct faith,
a certain hope, a perfect charity,
sense and knowledge
so that I may carry out
Your holy and true command.

(From the young Francis' time of searching for his life's purpose:
Secular Franciscans of Australia, *Franciscan Spirituality*, 2)



Saint Francis of Assisi

1182 – 1226



POVERTY and OUTREACH to the POOR and MARGINALISED

“Though He was in the form of God, Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the human likeness. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.” St Paul in Philipians 2:6-8

POVERTY and Outreach to the Poor and Marginalised

Francis' transformation took time and effort. He wanted to identify completely with Jesus who emptied himself to become like us. He wanted to depend only on God, living a simple life in humility and poverty, like Jesus. It was not easy to live with the poor, in hardship, begging door to door and eating food he did not like, but he thanked God for it all. People could see the truth of the teachings of St Francis of Assisi in his way of life. (St Bonaventure, *Life*, Ch 7; *Legend*, Ch VIII)

Francis saw Jesus Christ in the poor and wanted everyone to experience Christ's love. He was courteous to all, rich and poor, with or without faith, judged to be good or not. He embraced those society rejected. He chose poverty as an act of love but did not promote it for those forced into it. He and his followers lived a difficult, insecure life. They were often mocked, ridiculed and regarded as mad. Some people played pranks on them and threw mud. There was no retaliation. They remembered Jesus' words: "If anyone will come after me, let them deny self, take up their cross and follow me." For the love of Christ, they accepted his cross. (St Bonaventure, *Life*, Ch 8, 5; *Little Flowers*, Ch II & V)

Francis' friars (brothers) worked to support themselves when they could, accepting as payment only what they needed to live, and no money. When unable to work, they begged. When questioned about their lack of possessions, Francis argued that they were free without belongings which required weapons and laws to defend them.

Francis regarded inner poverty as vital for a spiritual life, for us to be free to become the persons God calls us to be. He knew from experience that honour, knowledge, talents and virtues, although good, can lead to pride if we are not careful. He also understood that self-giving love can lead to great suffering and death.

GIVE TO THOSE WHO ASK

One day, contrary to his custom, Francis severely rebuked a poor man who had asked for alms. Immediately sorry, he began to upbraid himself that it was a shame to hold back from one in great need. Francis resolved in his heart never in the future to refuse the requests of anyone, if at all possible. He thus began to practise— before he began to teach—the biblical counsel: “To him who asks of thee, give; and from him who would borrow of thee, do not turn away.”

(Matthew 5:42; D. Runyan, Christian History Institute)



GIVE TO THE ONE WHO NEEDS IT MORE

Upon abandoning his own wealth, Francis determined that there must be no one anywhere poorer than he. No matter what rags Francis might be wearing, should he meet upon a beggar dressed even worse, Francis would immediately remove his own clothing and give it to the beggar. “I think the great Almsgiver would account it a theft in me,” he said, “did I not give that which I wear unto one needing it more.”

(St Bonaventure, *Life*, VIII, 5; D. Runyan, Christian History Institute)

FROM FRANCIS AND FRIENDS

- The holy man regarded Poverty as the familiar friend of the Son of God. (St Bonaventure, *Life*, VII, 1)
- It chanced once that he met a poor man on the road and, beholding his nakedness, was stricken to the heart ... “This man’s destitution has brought on us great reproach, for we have chosen Poverty as our great riches, and lo! she shines forth more clearly in him.” (St Bonaventure, *Life*, VII, 6)
- We are called to have a spirit of generosity with the goods of this world as well as a real detachment, so that the material world does not consume us. In other words, we are called to make the person of Jesus Christ and His Holy Gospel our first priority, freeing us to do good with all that we have. (Friars of St Francis *Spirit of Poverty*)
- Echoing Saint Francis, Pope Francis said, “If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, ... The Body of Christ ... can be seen, through charity and sharing, in the faces and persons of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters.” (Pope Francis, *World Day of the Poor*, 2017)



YOUR LIFE

God has a place for everyone in His Kingdom. Here on earth the Lord lovingly accepts us all who desire Him and keep His commandments. Not all are called to live the kind of poverty that the saints have lived. In truth some are given wealth in order to help the works and projects of Christ’s Holy Church, as well as the poor and needy. Married couples have a duty to provide for themselves and their children. Yet the spirit of this great virtue is for all of us to strive. (Friars of St Francis, *Spirit of Poverty*)

- **What stands out as you read Francis' life of poverty?**
- **Prayerful Remembering:** Allow 10-15 minutes in a quiet place. Ask for the Spirit's guidance.
 - Have you experienced real deprivation or marginalisation? How have you coped, physically and spiritually? Has there been a 'Francis' figure or group to help you?
 - Have you chosen or accepted physical poverty and simplicity?
 - Francis and his followers regarded lepers as a special presence of Jesus. Who are the lepers in our society?
- **Pay attention** to what comes to mind as you remember and pray. 'Listen' with your heart.
- **Ask** for the gifts God's Spirit wants to give you as you go forward.
- **Finish with a prayer of thanks.**
- **Writing:** You may want to write down thoughts or words from your prayer.

PRAYER

Let us desire nothing else
 let us wish for nothing else
 let nothing else please us and cause us delight
 except our Creator and Redeemer and Saviour,
 the One True God, Who is the Fullness of Good,
 all good, every good, the true and supreme Good;
 Let nothing hinder us,
 nothing separate us or nothing come between us. Amen.
 (Earlier Rule of St Francis in Friars of St Francis, *Spirit of Poverty*)





Saint Francis of Assisi
1182 – 1226



PEACE

with GOD, SELF, OTHERS
and all CREATION

“Peace be with you.” John 20:21

PEACE with God, Self, Others and all Creation

After leaving everything to follow Christ, Francis began to see the world and its people in a new light. He was committed to the Gospel message of peace and all his teaching began with the words: “May the Lord give you peace.” (cf. John 20:21; *Legend*, Ch VIII, 26)

Saint Francis’ life, writes Pope Leo, “points to the authentic source of peace” - the peace Jesus brought to the world was announced by angels at his birth: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those whom he loves” (Luke 2:14); the Risen Lord spoke peace to his frightened disciples on the evening of Easter: “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). “The Franciscan vision of peace is not limited to the relations between human beings, but also embraces the whole of creation. Francis, who calls the sun ‘brother’ and the moon ‘sister’, who recognises in every creature a reflection of divine beauty, reminds us that peace must be extended to the entire family of Creation ... Peace with God, peace among human beings and with creation are inseparable dimensions of a single call to universal reconciliation.” (Pope Leo, *Letter to The Franciscan Family*, 2026)

Saint Francis “sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters” (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 2). He united people who disagreed with one another. Francis’ peace-making extended to the Muslim world. He visited the Holy Land, Syria and the Sultan in Egypt. He hoped to win everyone to Christ, but remained courteous and respectful when this hope was not realised. “Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that ‘God is love and those who abide in love abide in God’ (1 Jn 4:16) ... Francis was able to welcome true peace into his heart and free himself of the desire to wield power over others. He became one of the poor and sought to live in harmony with all.” (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 4)



HOSTILITY AND CONFLICT AVOIDED:

A RESPECTFUL FRATERNAL APPROACH TO THOSE OF ANOTHER FAITH

There is an episode in the life of Saint Francis that shows his openness of heart, which knew no bounds and transcended differences of origin, nationality, colour or religion. It was his visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt ... Francis went to meet the Sultan with the same attitude that he instilled in his disciples: if they found themselves “among the Saracens and other nonbelievers”, without renouncing their own identity they were not to “engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God’s sake”. ... Saint Francis urged that all forms of hostility or conflict be avoided and that a humble and fraternal “subjection” be shown to those who did not share his faith. (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 3; Francis also met with the Sultan of Babylon, *Little Flowers* Ch XXIV)

PEACE WITH ALL CREATION

“The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, God’s boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is a caress of God.”
(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 84)

Francis loved spending time in the mountains, caves, ruined churches and other places where he could look, listen, wonder, reflect and pray. His relationship with our triune God – Father Creator, Jesus Christ, Son and Holy Spirit – was bound up with his close relationship with the natural world: “Be praised Lord, with all Your Creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun ... Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs” (Canticle of Creatures). He saw the Creator revealed in nature. The Sun, Moon, Earth, Water, Fire, Birds, a Wolf ... all spoke of God, Father and Creator. His followers told many stories of his all-embracing love for God’s creatures, his caring, and his extraordinary ability to connect with them. (St Bonaventure, *Life*, Ch 8)

The truth of the Incarnation, that Jesus was born a human being to walk and live on this earth, was a source of great wonder for Francis. He understood, at a deep level, that for each one of us, our personal relationship with God is very much tied up with the way we relate to God’s creation: he sings this in his Canticle of Creatures, where living creatures and non-living elements of the world are our close relatives – Mother, Sister and Brother.





HE PREACHED TO THE BIRDS

And as he went on his way ... St Francis lifted up his eyes, and saw on some trees by the wayside a great multitude of birds; and being much surprised, he said to his companions, “Wait for me here by the way, whilst I go and preach to my little sisters the birds”; and entering into the field, he began to preach to the birds which were on the ground, and suddenly all those also in the trees came round him, and all listened while St Francis preached to them, and did not fly away until he gave them his blessing.

Now the substance of the sermon was this: “My little sisters the birds, you owe so much to God, your Creator, and you ought to sing his praise at all times and in all places because he has given you liberty to fly about into all places; and though you neither spin nor sew, he has given you a twofold and a threefold clothing for yourselves and your offspring ... he feeds you ... he has given you fountains and rivers to quench your thirst, mountains and valleys in which to take refuge, and trees in which to build your nests; so that your Creator loves you very much, having thus favoured you with such bounties. Beware, my little sisters, of the sin of ingratitude, and study always to give praise to God.” ... Having finished his sermon, St Francis made the sign of the cross, and gave them leave to fly away. (*Little Flowers*, Chapter XVI)

FROM FRANCIS AND FRIENDS

- Those are true peacemakers, who concerning all those in things which they suffer in this age, preserve peace in soul and body for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Admonitions*, 15)
- Blessed the person who is patient with their neighbour's shortcomings as they would like them to be if they were a similar position themselves. (Adapted from *Admonition XVIII*, "On Patience")
- "All praise be yours, my Lord, through those who grant pardon for love of you; through those who endure sickness and trial. Happy those who endure in peace, by you, Most High, they will be crowned." (*Canticle of Creatures*)
- "LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore" – "Praise be to you, my Lord". In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs." (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 1; St Francis' *Canticle of Creatures*)
- **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;
 and 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.
 Amen. ('*Peace Prayer*' attributed to St Francis of Assisi)

YOUR LIFE

Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace. (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 2)



- **What stands out as you read Francis' life of poverty?**
- **Prayerful Remembering:** Allow 10-15 minutes in a quiet place. Ask for the Spirit's guidance.
 - Do you 'sow seeds of peace?' Are you at peace? With God, self, others, creation?
 - Imagine visiting aspects of your life with Jesus Christ by your side: He wants to enfold you in Love and Peace. 'Be' with him. 'Hear' what he may want to say to you at this time.
- **Pay attention** to what comes to mind as you remember and pray. 'Listen' with your heart.
- **Ask** for the gifts God's Spirit wants to give you as you go forward.
- **Finish with a prayer of thanks.**
- **Write:** You may want to write down thoughts or words from your prayer.

CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honour, and all blessing.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no human is worthy to mention your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.

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 whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who 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 our Sister Mother Earth,
 who sustains and governs us,
 and who produces various fruit 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 You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
 From whom no one living can escape.
 Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
 Blessed are those whom death will find in 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.
 (St Francis of Assisi, 1225, Franciscan Media)





Saint Francis of Assisi
1182 – 1226

DISCIPLES OF JESUS

COMMUNITY – SHARING HIS MISSION

In his simple and direct way, Saint Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives.

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 1

DISCIPLES OF JESUS

Community — Sharing His Mission

At first, Francis thought that Jesus was calling him to be a hermit, but others came to join him. Bernard of Quintaville, another rich young man, gave up everything to join Francis. Others arrived and a small community formed. They followed the pattern of life of Jesus and his disciples, to preach God's kingdom, to care for the poor, to heal and do good wherever God called them. They were inspired by these Gospel passages:

“If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven.” (Matthew 19:21)

“Take nothing for your journey.” (Luke 9:3)

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself ...” (Matthew 16:24)

“As you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-diseases, drive out devils. You received without charge, give without charge.” (Matthew 10:7-8)

A young noblewoman of Assisi, Clare aged 17, asked to share their vision and life. A community of “Poor Ladies,” based at San Damiano, was formed to pray and care for the poor.

The young men and women who joined Francis were leaving behind the pre-occupation with war and status that dominated many in the Church and society at that time. They were deeply prayerful people, actively serving others. In 1210, with a small band of brothers, Francis went to Rome to ask Pope Innocent III to approve a ‘Rule’ of life for the Friars Minor (‘Little Brothers’). By 1221 hundreds across Europe had become members of a Franciscan family.

In Francis’ time, as in ours, living in community had its demands and its joys. When challenged by those he found most difficult, Francis looked deeper: “Jesus is within them all if we can only learn to see him there.” (Franciscan Spirituality)

Francis accepted human frailty. He did not ask others to do all he demanded of himself. His humble self-knowledge, awareness of personal weaknesses, and confidence in God's infinite love and mercy, enabled him to help others grow into the persons God intended them to be. He was a good listener who accompanied his brothers with good humour, encouragement and care. Following Francis' own example, the friars were to preach by deeds as well as words, and to be true to what others expected and hoped to see in them (St Bonaventure, *Life*, Ch 6, 2; Ch 12, 8). He regarded the vice of slander a serious sin, as one soul could be 'slain' by the tongue of another. (St Bonaventure, *Life*, Ch 8, 4)

Joy and celebration were integral to Francis' personality and way of life. There was joy to be found in trusting God, living simply, patiently enduring trials and serving others in charity. (*Little Flowers*, Ch VIII)



The Death of St Francis of Assisi

In his final days, aged in his early 40s, Francis, broken in body and spirit, felt many endeavours had failed: the Crusades were not ended and his Friars were in disagreement. He was going blind and a red-hot iron was used to cauterise his eye. He faced this useless and painful treatment with prayer: "Brother Fire, God made you beautiful and strong and useful; I pray you be courteous with me." In his final hours, filled with love, he said goodbye to friends and praised and thanked God. Lying on the ground as he had requested, Saint Francis of Assisi died on the 4th October, 1226. (St Bonaventure, *Life*, Ch 14)

Brother Wolf and Human Nature

A different animal serves to amplify another important aspect of Franciscan spirituality. The savage wolf of Gubbio threatened to devour every living thing in the village, so “rabid with hunger” was it. In a sense, the wolf represents the fierceness of untamed human nature and how we would act if left to ourselves outside of grace. But the grace-filled Francis was not afraid to go “where the wolf lives”. At the moment the beast threatened to attack him, Francis made the sign of the cross, at which “the wolf closed its terrible jaws and stopped running; it lowered its head and lay down at the saint’s feet, as though it had become a lamb ... Francis says: “Brother Wolf, I promise that I will have the people of this town give you food every day as long as you live, so that you will never again suffer from hunger.” As the author relates: “The wolf lived two years more, and it went from door to door for food. It hurt no one, and no one hurt it.” (P. J. Cameron, *Classics of Catholic Spirituality*, 14-15; cf *Little Flowers*, Ch XXI)



He washed the skin of a leper who was angry and ungrateful

A leper was annoying the brothers, abusing them and blaspheming. Francis went to him and said “Peace be with you.” The leper complained, but Francis asked what the leper wanted from him. The leper asked to be washed. Francis carefully washed the leper with warm water and herbs. The man began to heal as his skin was washed. As the leper’s body mended, his soul was healed too and he apologised for his behaviour. (Adapted from *Favourite Heroes and Holy People*, 103; *Little Flowers*, Ch XXV)



FROM FRANCIS AND FRIENDS

- Blessed is the one, who supports his neighbour on account of his frailty, to the extent that he would want to be supported by him, if he were to fall into a similar situation. (*Admonitions*, 18)
- Blessed the one ... who reflects prudently on what he is to say and the manner in which he is to reply. (*Admonitions*, 22)
- How much interior patience and humility a servant of God may have cannot be known so long as he is contented. But when the time comes that those who ought to please him go against him, as much patience and humility as he then shows, so much has he and no more. (*Admonitions*, 13)
- You must always believe that God's power to forgive is greater than your power to sin. (*Little Flowers*, IX)
- And let us love our neighbours as our very selves (cf. Mt 22:39). And if one does not want to love them as his very self, at least he does not charge them with wicked things, but does good (to them). Moreover, let those who have received the power of judging others exercise it with mercy, just as they themselves wish to obtain mercy from the Lord. (*Letter to the Faithful*, 2)
- Francis "did himself first practice that which he afterward preached unto others." (St Bonaventure, *Life*, Ch 12, 8)

YOUR LIFE

Then we have to embrace the leper within ourselves. Often our self-hatred, or wounded ego is covered up by an inflated ego and pride, or we sometimes hide our broken interior behind a show of outward activity and accomplishments. But it is all a show. We often deceive ourselves into thinking that this is who we really are. But it is not true. There is a deeper self that is waiting for the love of God. Sooner or later we must all face the “leper” of our deepest hurts and fears. When we can embrace these, then we can bring them to the forgiving love of God. Then we can be healed. Then we will have embraced and kissed the leper. (J. M. Talbot, *Reflections*, 16)

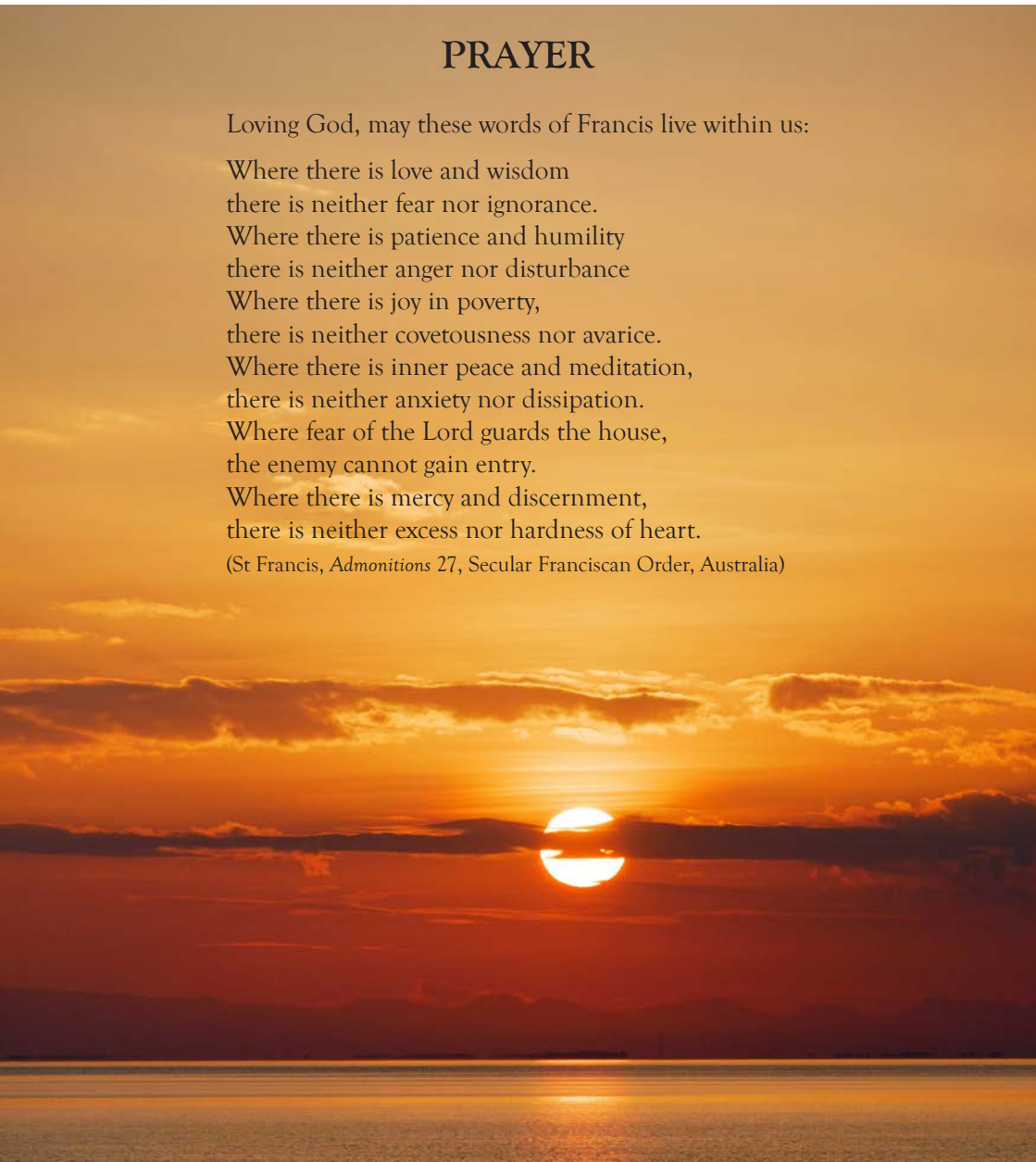
- **What stands out from your reading?**
- **Prayerful Remembering:** Allow 10-15 minutes in a quiet place. Ask for the Spirit’s guidance.
 - Following Francis’ example, how do you or could you help build community?
 - We often focus on ‘lepers’ outside ourselves, but how do we begin to recognise, and even ‘embrace’, the ‘leper’ inside, especially of our deepest hurts and fears?
 - Francis inspired a community of disciples to share Christ’s mission and help others become true disciples of Jesus. How do you help others become all they are called to be?
- **Pay attention** to what comes to mind as you remember and pray. **‘Listen’** with your heart.
- **Ask** for the gifts God’s Spirit wants to give you as you go forward.
- **Finish with a prayer of thanks.**
- **Write:** You may want to write down thoughts or words from your prayer.

PRAYER

Loving God, may these words of Francis live within us:

Where there is love and wisdom
there is neither fear nor ignorance.
Where there is patience and humility
there is neither anger nor disturbance
Where there is joy in poverty,
there is neither covetousness nor avarice.
Where there is inner peace and meditation,
there is neither anxiety nor dissipation.
Where fear of the Lord guards the house,
the enemy cannot gain entry.
Where there is mercy and discernment,
there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.

(St Francis, *Admonitions* 27, Secular Franciscan Order, Australia)



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See Also: Franciscan Schools, St Francis of Assisi Chronology (+ other valuable resources) www.franschools.au/resources/





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