



St. Francis of Assisi

"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

St. Francis (1182-1226) is one of the most beloved figures in church history. Born to a wealthy Italian merchant family, he spent his youth running with a fast crowd and leading his friends into all kinds of trouble. After starting a life in the military, Francis had a vision that led to an abrupt reversal, giving himself to God's work instead. He began to pursue a life of extreme poverty, wearing rags and begging for food. Soon, others abandoned their comfortable lives to follow Francis sleeping out in the open and living the Gospel. The small group of brothers grew explosively into a new monastic order, the Franciscans, as well as spawning a sister group for women, the Poor Clares. In time, the preaching of the Franciscans launched a religious revival that swept across Europe, transforming the lives of many people. However, Francis is best known for endearing qualities reflected in the many stories told about him. He once preached a sermon to a flock of birds to be thankful for the gifts that God had given them. Known for his love of nature, the Feast of St. Francis is now associated mostly with the blessing of animals. During the Crusades, he traveled to the Middle East to meet directly with Muslim sultan in an attempt to make peace. Although unsuccessful in this effort, the sultan was impressed enough to grant Francis safe travel home, and the event now stands as an inspiration for interfaith dialogue. Years of fasting and hard living eventually took its toll on him, leading to blindness and decreasing health. Yet, Francis never lost his joy, composing the beautiful Cantic of the Sun during this time of suffering. He died on October 4th, 1226, a day now commemorated by countless people across the world each year.

St. Francis is remembered for his generosity of spirit and love for his brothers and sisters, both human and otherwise. We honor his life and ministry that continues to inspire people of faith to this day.