

The Third Rule of
The Order of Lesser
Brothers
(Also known as the
Franciscans)

Francis left behind not only a legend but a religious order. Popularly known today as the Franciscan order, its real name is the *ordo fratrum minorum*, "the order of lesser brothers."

The Franciscans proved enormously popular because, like Francis himself, they fulfilled a desperate need, in fact a whole series of them. Unlike the older monastic orders, they were not bound to a cloistered life within the confines of a monastery. Thus They and the other great mendicant order created at that time, the Dominicans, constituted a mobile striking force which the church could utilize wherever it seemed necessary.

At that very moment there was a need for pastoral care in the cities, which had grown so rapidly that the old ecclesiastical structures were no longer adequate. The mendicants settled in the cities and developed a program of preaching and pastoral guidance so effective that the regular clergy were soon extremely jealous.

At that moment the universities were growing and the translation of Aristotle into Latin was challenging Christian scholars. The mendicants took up the challenge with gusto, and by the end of the thirteenth century most of the lead the scholars in the major universities were either Dominicans or Franciscans.

At that moment the church was engaged in an all-out assault on heresy. In fact, it had created a new institution to deal with it, the inquisition. The mendicants were widely used as inquisitors, and by the turn of the fourteenth century most inquisitors were either Franciscans or Dominicans.

A religious order is based on a rule. The first rule of the Franciscan order, submitted to the pope in 1209, has long since disappeared from history. It was the rule of 1223, the third produced by Francis, which became the definitive one. It is still in use today.

The Rule.

I. In the name of the Lord, the life of the lesser brothers begins.

The rule and life of the lesser brothers is this: To observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of our own, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church; and the rest of the brothers are obliged to obey Francis and his successors.

II. Concerning those who wish to adopt this life.

If someone should wish to adopt this life and should come to our brothers, they must send them to their provincial ministers to whom alone is granted the right to receive brothers. The ministers should examine them carefully regarding the Catholic faith and sacraments of the church. If they believe all these things, wishing to confess them faithfully and observe them diligently until the end; and if they have no wives, or their wives have entered a convent, or permission has been given to them by authority of their bishop, a vow of chastity having been taken and their wives being of such an age as to avoid suspicion; then let them go, sell all they have, and attempt to give it to the poor. If they cannot do so, their good intention will suffice. Let the brothers and their ministers beware of becoming concerned about the new brothers' temporal possessions, for they should freely dispose of their belongings as God inspires them. If they ask advice, the ministers may refer them to some God-fearing brothers through whose counsel their possessions may be distributed to the poor.

Later, let them concede clothing of probation to the new brothers: Two tunics with hoods, belt and trousers, and a chaperon reaching down to the belt, unless the minister decides according to God that something else should be done. When the year of probation is over, let them be received into obedience, promising to observe this life and rule always; and, according to the command of the lord pope, it will be

absolutely forbidden to them to leave the order, for according the holy gospel "no one who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

And let those who have promised obedience take one tunic with a hood, and let those who wish it have another without a hood. And those who must may wear shoes. All the brothers are to wear inexpensive clothing, and they can use sackcloth and other material to mend it with God's blessing.

III. Concerning the divine office and fasting; and how the brothers ought to travel through the world.

Clerics are to perform the divine office according to the rite of the Roman Church, except for the Psalter, and they can have breviaries for that purpose. Laymen are to say twenty-four "Our Fathers" at matins; five at lauds; seven each at prime, terce, sext and none; twelve at vespers; and seven at compline. They should also pray for the dead.

They should fast from the feast of all saints until Christmas. Those who voluntarily fast at Quadragesima, those forty days after Epiphany which the Lord consecrated with his own holy fasting, will themselves be blessed by the Lord; yet they are not required to do so if they do not want to. They must fast during Lent, but they are not required to do so at other times except on Fridays. In case of obvious necessity, however, they are excused from bodily fasting.

I counsel, admonish and beg my brothers that, when they travel about the world, they should not be quarrelsome, dispute with words, or criticize others, but rather should be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to all as is fitting. They must not ride on horseback unless forced to so by obvious necessity or illness. Whatever house they enter, they are first to say, "Peace to this house" (Lk. 10:5). According to the holy gospel they can eat whatever food is set before them.

IV. That the brothers should not accept money.

I strictly forbid the brothers to receive money in any form either directly or through an intermediary. Nevertheless, the ministers and custodians can work through spiritual friends to care for the sick and clothe the brothers, according to place, season and climate, as necessity may seem to demand. This must be done, however, in such a way that they do not receive money.

V. On their manner of working.

Those brothers whom the Lord favours with the gift of working should do so faithfully and devotedly, so that idleness, the enemy of the soul, is excluded yet the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, which all other temporal things should serve, is not extinguished. As payment for their labour let them receive that which is necessary for themselves and their brothers, but not money. Let them receive it humbly as befits those who serve God and seek after the holiest poverty.

VI. That the brothers should appropriate nothing for themselves; and on how alms should be begged; and concerning sick brothers.

The brothers should appropriate neither house, nor place, nor anything for themselves; and they should go confidently after alms, serving God in poverty and humility, as pilgrims and strangers in this world. Nor should they feel ashamed, for God made himself poor in this world for us. This is that peak of the highest poverty which has made you, my dearest brothers, heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven, poor in things but rich in virtues. Let this be your portion. It leads into the land of the living and, adhering totally to it, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ wish never to have anything else in this world, beloved brothers.

And wherever brothers meet one another, let them act like members of a common family. And let them securely make their needs known to

one another, for if a mother loves and cares for her carnal son, how much more should one love and care for his spiritual son? And if one of them should become ill, let the other brothers serve him as they themselves would like to be served.

VII. On the penances to be imposed on sinning brothers.

If any of the brothers should sin mortally at the instigation of the enemy, they should recur to their provincial ministers without delay if the sin is one of those for which such recourse is required. The ministers, if they are priests, should mercifully prescribe a penance for them. If they are not priests, they should see that it is prescribed by others in the order who are such, as seems best to them according to God. They should be careful not to become angry and upset over someone's sin, for anger and perturbation in oneself or others impedes love.

VIII. On the election of the general minister of this brotherhood; and on the chapter at Pentecost.

The brothers are always bound to have a brother of the order as general minister and servant of the entire brotherhood, and they are strictly bound to obey him. When he dies, his successor is to be elected by the provincial ministers and custodians during the Pentecost chapter, at which provincial ministers are always to assemble in the place designated by the minister general. The general chapter should meet every three years, or sooner or later if the minister general should so ordain. If at some point it should appear to the provincial ministers and custodians that the minister general is incapable of serving the brothers properly, the aforesaid brothers to whom election is entrusted should, in the name of God, choose someone else.

After the Pentecost chapter, the ministers and custodians may call their brothers to a chapter in their own custody's once in the same year, if they wish and it seems worthwhile.

IX. On preachers.

The friars must not preach in the diocese of any bishop if they have been forbidden to do so by him. And no brother should dare preach to the people unless he has been examined and approved by the minister general of his brotherhood and the office of preaching has been conceded to him. I also admonish and exhort the brothers that in their preaching their words be studied and chaste, useful and edifying to the people, telling them about vices and virtues, punishment and glory; and they ought to be brief, because the Lord kept his words brief when he was on earth.

X. On the admonition and correction of brothers.

Brothers who are ministers and servants of other brothers must visit and admonish their brothers, and they should correct them humbly and lovingly, prescribing nothing against their soul or our rule. Brothers who are subject to authority must remember that they have surrendered their own wills for the sake of God. Thus I strictly order them to obey their ministers in all those things which they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not contrary to the soul and to our rule. And wherever there are brothers who know they cannot observe the rule spiritually, those brothers should and may recur to their ministers. The ministers should receive them lovingly and generously and treat them so intimately that the brothers can speak and act as lords do with their servants. For that is the way it ought to be. The ministers should be servants of all the brothers.

I admonish and exhort the brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, worldly care and concern, criticism and complaint. And I admonish the illiterate not to worry about studying but to realize instead that above all they should wish to have the spirit of the Lord working within them, and that they should pray to him constantly with a pure heart, be humble, be patient in persecution and infirmity, and love those who persecute, blame or accuse us, for the Lord says, "Love your enemies, pray for those who

persecute and accuse you" (Matt. 5:44). "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). "He who has persevered until the end, however, will be saved" (Matt. 10:22).

XI. That the brothers should not enter the convents of nuns.

I strictly order all the brothers to avoid suspicious meetings or conversations with women and to stay out of the convents of nuns except in cases where special permission has been granted by the Holy See. Nor should they be godfathers of men or women, lest it lead to scandal among or concerning the brothers.

XII. Concerning those who go among the Saracens and other infidels.

Whoever should, by divine inspiration, wish to go among the Saracens and other infidels must ask permission from their provincial ministers. The ministers should grant permission only to those whom they consider qualified to be sent.

I enjoin the ministers by obedience to ask the Lord Pope for a cardinal of the Holy Roman Church to serve as governor, protector and corrector of their brotherhood so that we servants and subjects at the feet of holy church, firm in faith, will always observe the poverty, humility and holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which we firmly promised.

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He indicated that the translations are available for educational use.

Wikipedia Article on St Francis

Saint Francis of Assisi (Italian: San Francesco d'Assisi; born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone, but nicknamed Francesco ("the Frenchman") by his father; 1181/1182 – October 3, 1226) was an Italian Catholic friar and preacher. He founded the men's Order of Friars Minor, the women's Order of St. Clare, and the Third Order of Saint Francis for men and women not able to live the lives of itinerant preachers, followed by the early members of the Order of Friars Minor, or the monastic lives of the Poor Clares. Francis is one of the most venerated religious figures in history.

Francis' father was Pietro di Bernardone, a prosperous silk merchant. Francis lived the high-spirited life typical of a wealthy young man, even fighting as a soldier for Assisi. While going off to war in 1204, Francis had a vision that directed him back to Assisi, where he lost his taste for his worldly life. On a pilgrimage to Rome, he joined the poor in begging at St. Peter's Basilica. The experience moved him to live in poverty. Francis returned home, began preaching on the streets, and soon gathered followers. His Order was authorized by Pope Innocent III in 1210. He then founded the Order of Poor Clares, which became an enclosed religious order for women, as well as the Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance (commonly called the Third Order).

In 1219, he went to Egypt in an attempt to convert the Sultan to put an end to the conflict of the Crusades. By this point, the Franciscan Order had grown to such an extent that its primitive organizational structure was no longer sufficient. He returned to Italy to organize the Order. Once his community was authorized by the Pope, he withdrew increasingly from external affairs. In 1223, Francis arranged for the first Christmas nativity scene. In 1224, he received the stigmata, making him the first recorded person to bear the wounds of Christ's Passion. He died during the evening hours of October 3, 1226, while listening to a reading he had requested of Psalm 142(141).

On July 16, 1228, he was proclaimed a saint by Pope Gregory IX. He is known as the patron saint of animals and the environment, and is one of the two patron saints of Italy (with Catherine of Siena). It is customary for Catholic and Anglican churches to hold ceremonies blessing animals on his feast day of October 4. He is also known for his love of the Eucharist, his sorrow during the Stations of the Cross, and for the creation of the Christmas crèche or Nativity Scene.

Early life

Francis of Assisi was one of seven children born in late 1181 or early 1182 to Pietro and his wife Pica de Bourlemont, about whom little is known except that she was a noblewoman originally from Provence. Pietro was in France on business when Francis was born in Assisi, and Pica had him baptized as Giovanni. When his father returned to Assisi, he took to calling him Francesco ("the Frenchman"), possibly in honour of his commercial success and enthusiasm for all things French. Since the child was renamed in infancy, the change can hardly have had anything to do with his aptitude for learning French, as some have thought. As a youth, Francesco became a devotee of troubadours and was fascinated with all things Transalpine. 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 pockets. His friends quickly chided and mocked him for his act of charity. When he got home, his father scolded him in rage.

In 1201, he joined a military expedition against Perugia and was taken as a prisoner at Collestrada, spending a year as a captive. It is possible that his spiritual conversion was a gradual process rooted in this experience. Upon his return to Assisi in 1203, Francis returned to his

carefree life. In 1204, a serious illness led him to a spiritual crisis. 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, deepening his ecclesiastical awakening.

According to the hagiographic legend, thereafter he began to avoid the sports and the feasts of his former companions. In response, they asked him laughingly 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". He spent much time in lonely places, asking God for enlightenment. By degrees he took to nursing lepers, the most repulsive victims in the lazar houses near Assisi. After a pilgrimage to Rome, where he joined the poor in begging at the doors of the churches, he said he had a mystical vision of Jesus Christ in the country chapel of San Damiano, just outside of Assisi, in which the Icon of Christ Crucified said to him, "Francis, Francis, go and repair My house 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 for this purpose.

His father, Pietro, highly indignant, attempted to change his mind, first with threats and then with beatings. In the midst of legal proceedings before the Bishop of Assisi, Francis renounced his father and his patrimony, laying aside even the garments he had received from him in front of the public. For the next couple of months he lived as a beggar in the region of Assisi. Returning to the countryside around the town for two years, he embraced the life of a penitent, during which he restored several ruined chapels in the countryside around Assisi, among them the Porziuncola, the little chapel of St. Mary of the Angels just outside the town, which later became his favourite abode.

Founding of the Franciscan Order

At the end of this period (on February 24, 1209, according to Jordan of Giano), Francis heard a sermon that changed his life forever. The sermon was about Matthew 10:9, in which Christ tells his followers they should go forth and proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven was upon them, that they should take no money with them, nor even a walking stick or shoes for the road. Francis was inspired to devote himself to a life of poverty.

Clad in a rough garment, barefoot, and, after the Gospel precept, without staff or scrip, he began to preach repentance. He was soon joined by his first follower, a prominent fellow townsman, the jurist Bernardo di Quintavalle, who contributed all that he had to the work. Within a year Francis had eleven followers. Francis chose never to be ordained a priest, and the community lived as "lesser brothers," *fratres minores* in Latin. The brothers lived a simple life in the deserted lazaretto of Rivo Torto near Assisi; but they spent much of their time wandering through the mountainous districts of Umbria, always cheerful and full of songs, yet making a deep impression upon their hearers by their earnest exhortations.

Francis' preaching to ordinary people was unusual since he had no license to do so. In 1209 he composed a simple rule for his followers ("friars"), the *Regula primitiva* or "Primitive Rule", which came from verses in the Bible.

The rule was "To follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in his footsteps." In 1209, Francis led his first eleven followers to Rome to seek permission from Pope Innocent III to found a new religious Order. Upon entry to Rome, the brothers encountered Bishop Guido of Assisi, who had in his company Giovanni di San Paolo, the Cardinal Bishop of Sabina. The Cardinal, who was the confessor of Pope Innocent III, was immediately sympathetic to Francis and agreed to represent Francis to the pope. Reluctantly, Pope Innocent agreed to meet with Francis and the brothers the next day. After several days,

the pope agreed to admit the group informally, adding that when God increased the group in grace and number, they could return for an official admittance. The group was tonsured. This was important in part because it recognized Church authority and prevented his following from possible accusations of heresy, as had happened to the Waldensians decades earlier. Though Pope Innocent initially had his doubts, following a dream in which he saw Francis holding up the Basilica of St. John Lateran (the cathedral of Rome, thus the 'home church' of all Christendom), he decided to endorse Francis' Order. This occurred, according to tradition, on April 16, 1210, and constituted the official founding of the Franciscan Order. The group, then the "Lesser Brothers" (Order of Friars Minor also known as the Franciscan Order), preached on the streets and had no possessions. They were centered in the Porziuncola and preached first in Umbria, before expanding throughout Italy.

Mission work

From then on, the new Order grew quickly with new vocations. When hearing Francis preaching in the church of San Rufino in Assisi in 1211, Clare of Assisi became deeply touched by his message and she realized her calling. Her cousin Rufino, the only male member of the family in their generation, also joined the new Order. On the night of Palm Sunday, March 28, 1212, Clare sneaked out of her family's palace. Francis received Clare at the Porziuncola and hereby established the Order of Poor Ladies, later called Poor Clares. This was an Order for women, and he gave a religious habit, or dress, similar to his own to the noblewoman later known as St. Clare of Assisi, before he then lodged her and a few companions in a nearby monastery of Benedictine nuns. Later he transferred them to San Damiano. There they were joined by many other women of Assisi. For those who could not leave their homes, he later formed the Third Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance. This was a fraternity composed of either laity or clergy whose members neither withdrew from the world nor took religious vows. Instead, they carried out the principles of Franciscan life in their daily lives. Before long this Order grew beyond Italy.

Determined to bring the Gospel to all God's creatures, Francis sought on several occasions to take his message out of Italy. In the late spring of 1212, he set out for Jerusalem, but he was shipwrecked by a storm on the Dalmatian coast, forcing him to return to Italy. On May 8, 1213, he was given the use of the mountain of La Verna (Alverna) as a gift from Count Orlando di Chiusi, who described it as “eminently suitable for whoever wishes to do penance in a place remote from mankind.” The mountain would become one of his favourite retreats for prayer.] Saint Francis Abandons His Father. Francis of Assisi renouncing to his father and his patrimony, laying aside even the garments he had received from him in front of the public.

In the same year, Francis sailed for Morocco, but this time an illness forced him to break off his journey in Spain. Back in Assisi, several noblemen (among them Tommaso da Celano, who would later write the biography of St. Francis) and some well-educated men joined his Order. In 1215, Francis went again to Rome for the Fourth Lateran Council. During this time, he probably met a canon, Dominic de Guzman (later to be Saint Dominic, the founder of the Friars Preachers, another Catholic religious order). In 1217, he offered to go to France. Cardinal Ugolino of Segni (the future Pope Gregory IX), an early and important supporter of Francis, advised him against this and said that he was still needed in Italy.

In 1219, accompanied by another friar and hoping to convert the Sultan of Egypt or win martyrdom in the attempt, Francis went to Egypt where a Crusader army had been encamped for over a year besieging the walled city of Damietta two miles (3.2 km) upstream from the mouth of one of the main channels of the Nile. The Sultan, al-Kamil, a nephew of Saladin, had succeeded his father as Sultan of Egypt in 1218 and was encamped upstream of Damietta, unable to relieve it. A bloody and futile attack on the city was launched by the Christians on August 29, 1219, following which both sides agreed to a ceasefire which lasted four weeks. It was most probably during this interlude that Francis and his companion crossed the Saracen lines and were brought before the Sultan, remaining in his camp for a few

days. The visit is reported in contemporary Crusader sources and in the earliest biographies of Francis, but they give no information about what transpired during the encounter beyond noting that the Sultan received Francis graciously and that Francis preached to the Saracens without effect, returning unharmed to the Crusader camp. No contemporary Arab source mentions the visit. One detail, added by Bonaventure in the official life of Francis (written forty years after the event), concerns an alleged challenge by Francis offering trial-by-fire in order to prove the veracity of the Christian Gospel.

Although Bonaventure does not suggest as much, subsequent biographies went further, claiming that a fire was kindled which Francis unhesitatingly entered without suffering burns. Such an incident is depicted in the late 13th-century fresco cycle, attributed to Giotto, in the upper basilica at Assisi (see accompanying illustration). The statuettes on the fresco relate to late-antique power representation and emphasizes the worldly authority of the sultan, as opposed to the spirituality of Francis. According to some late sources, the Sultan gave Francis permission to visit the sacred places in the Holy Land and even to preach there. All that can safely be asserted is that Francis and his companion left the Crusader camp for Acre, from where they embarked for Italy in the latter half of 1220. Drawing on a 1267 sermon by Bonaventure, later sources report that the Sultan secretly converted or accepted a death-bed baptism as a result of the encounter with Francis. The Franciscan Order has been present in the Holy Land almost uninterruptedly since 1217 when Brother Elias arrived at Acre. It received concessions from the Mameluke Sultan in 1333 with regard to certain Holy Places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and (so far as concerns the Catholic Church) jurisdictional privileges from Pope Clement VI in 1342.

At Greccio near Assisi, around 1220, Francis celebrated Christmas by setting up the first known presepio or crèche (Nativity scene). His nativity imagery reflected the scene in traditional paintings. He used real animals to create a living scene so that the worshippers could contemplate the birth of the child Jesus in a direct way, making use of

the senses, especially sight. Thomas of Celano, a biographer of Francis and Saint Bonaventure both, tell how he used only a straw-filled manger (feeding trough) set between a real ox and donkey. According to Thomas, it was beautiful in its simplicity, with the manger acting as the altar for the Christmas Mass.

Reorganization of the Franciscan Order and death

By this time, the growing Order of friars was divided into provinces and groups were sent to France, Germany, Hungary, Spain and to the East. When receiving a report of the martyrdom of five brothers in Morocco, Francis returned to Italy via Venice. Cardinal Ugolino di Conti was then nominated by the Pope as the protector of the Order. The friars in Italy at this time were causing problems, and as such, Francis had to return in order to correct these problems. The Franciscan Order had grown at an unprecedented rate, when compared to prior religious orders, but its organizational sophistication had not kept up with this growth and had little more to govern it than Francis' example and simple rule. To address this problem, Francis prepared a new and more detailed Rule, the "First Rule" or "Rule Without a Papal Bull" (*Regula prima, Regula non bullata*), which again asserted devotion to poverty and the apostolic life. However, it introduced greater institutional structure, although this was never officially endorsed by the pope.

On September 29, 1220, Francis handed over the governance of the Order to Brother Peter Catani at the Porziuncola. However, Brother Peter died only five months later, on March 10, 1221, and was buried in the Porziuncola. When numerous miracles were attributed to the deceased brother, people started to flock to the Porziuncola, disturbing the daily life of the Franciscans. Francis then prayed, asking Peter to stop the miracles and to obey in death as he had obeyed during his life.

The reports of miracles ceased. Brother Peter was succeeded by Brother Elias as Vicar of Francis. Two years later, Francis modified the "First Rule" (creating the "Second Rule" or "Rule With a Bull"), and Pope Honorius III approved it on November 29, 1223. As the official Rule of the Order, it called on the friars "to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of our own and in chastity." In addition, it set regulations for discipline, preaching, and entry into the Order. Once the Rule was endorsed by the Pope, Francis withdrew increasingly from external affairs. During 1221 and 1222, Francis crossed Italy, first as far south as Catania in Sicily and afterwards as far north as Bologna.

While he was praying on the mountain of Verna, during a forty-day fast in preparation for Michaelmas (September 29), Francis is said to have had a vision on or about September 14, 1224, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, as a result of which he received the stigmata. Brother Leo, who had been with Francis at the time, left a clear and simple account of the event, the first definite account of the phenomenon of stigmata. "Suddenly he saw a vision of a seraph, a six-winged angel on a cross. This angel gave him the gift of the five wounds of Christ." Suffering from these stigmata and from trachoma, Francis received care in several cities (Siena, Cortona, Nocera) to no avail. In the end, he was brought back to a hut next to the Porziuncola. Here, in the place where it all began, feeling the end approaching, he spent the last days of his life dictating his spiritual Testament. He died on the evening of Saturday, October 3, 1226, singing Psalm 142(141), "Voce mea ad Dominum".

On July 16, 1228, he was pronounced a saint by Pope Gregory IX (the former cardinal Ugolino di Conti, friend of St. Francis and Cardinal Protector of the Order). The next day, the Pope laid the foundation stone for the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. Francis was buried on May 25, 1230, under the Lower Basilica, but his tomb was soon hidden on orders of Brother Elias to protect it from Saracen invaders. His exact burial place remained unknown until it was re-discovered in 1818. Pasquale Belli then constructed for the remains a crypt in neo-

classical style in the Lower Basilica. It was refashioned between 1927 and 1930 into its present form by Ugo Tarchi, stripping the wall of its marble decorations. In 1978, the remains of St. Francis were examined and confirmed by a commission of scholars appointed by Pope Paul VI, and put into a glass urn in the ancient stone tomb.

Character and legacy

It has been argued that no one else in history was as dedicated as Francis to imitate the life, and carry out the work of Christ, in Christ's own way. This is important in understanding Francis' character and his affinity for the Eucharist and respect for the priests who carried out the sacrament.

He and his followers celebrated and even venerated poverty. Poverty was so central to his character that in his last written work, the Testament, he said that absolute personal and corporate poverty was the essential lifestyle for the members of his Order.

He believed that nature itself was the mirror of God. He called all creatures his "brothers" and "sisters," and even preached to the birds and supposedly persuaded a wolf to stop attacking some locals if they agreed to feed the wolf. In his "Canticle of the Creatures" ("Praises of Creatures" or "Canticle of the Sun"), he mentioned the "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon," the wind and water, and "Sister Death." He referred to his chronic illnesses as his "sisters." His deep sense of brotherhood under God embraced others, and he declared that "he considered himself no friend of Christ if he did not cherish those for whom Christ died."

Francis' visit to Egypt and attempted rapprochement with the Muslim world had far-reaching consequences, long past his own death, since after the fall of the Crusader Kingdom, it would be the Franciscans, of all Catholics, who would be allowed to stay on in the Holy Land and be recognized as "Custodians of the Holy Land" on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Nature and the environment

Francis preached the teaching of the Catholic Church, that the world was created good and beautiful by God but suffers a need for redemption because of the primordial sin of man. He preached to man and beast the universal ability and duty of all creatures to praise God (a common theme in the Psalms) and the duty of men to protect and enjoy nature as both the stewards of God's creation and as creatures ourselves. On November 29, 1979, Pope John Paul II declared St. Francis to be the Patron of Ecology. Many of the stories that surround the life of St. Francis say that he had a great love for animals and the environment.

Perhaps the most famous incident that illustrates the Saint's humility towards nature is recounted in the "Fioretti" ("Little Flowers"), a collection of legends and folklore that sprang up after the Saint's death. It is said that, 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 had compassion upon the townsfolk, and so he went up into the hills to find the wolf. Soon, fear of the animal had caused all his companions to flee, though the saint pressed on. When he found the wolf, he made the sign of the cross and commanded the wolf to come to him and hurt no one. Miraculously the wolf closed his jaws and lay down at the feet of St. Francis.

"Brother Wolf, you do much harm in these parts and you have done great evil," said Francis. "All these people accuse you and curse you...But brother wolf, I would like to make peace between you and the people." 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 even made a pact on behalf of the town dogs, that they would not bother the wolf again. Finally, to show the townspeople that they would not be harmed, Francis blessed the wolf.

Then during the World Environment Day 1982, John Paul II said that St. 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, January 1, 1990, the saint of Assisi "offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation..." He went on to make the point that: "As a friend of the poor who was loved by God's creatures, Saint 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."

Pope John Paul II concluded that section of the document with these words, "It is my hope that the inspiration of Saint Francis will help us to keep ever alive a sense of 'fraternity' with all those good and beautiful things which Almighty God has created."

Feast day

Francis of Assisi Francisco de Zurbarán. Saint Francis' feast day is observed on October 4. The Evangelical Church in Germany, however, commemorates St. Francis' feast day on his death day, October 3.

Saint Francis' feast day is observed on October 4. A secondary feast in

honour of the stigmata received by St. Francis, celebrated on September 17, was inserted in the General Roman Calendar in 1585 (later than the Tridentine Calendar) and suppressed in 1604, but was restored in 1615. In the New Roman Missal of 1969, it was removed again from the General Calendar, as something of a duplication of the main feast on October 4, and left to the calendars of certain localities and of the Franciscan Order. Wherever the traditional Roman Missal is used, however, the feast of the Stigmata remains in the General Calendar.

On June 18, 1939, Pope Pius XII named Francis a joint Patron Saint of Italy along with Saint Catherine of Siena with the apostolic letter "Licet Commissa". Pope Pius also mentioned the two saints in the laudative discourse he pronounced on May 5, 1949, in the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

Pope Francis

On 13 March 2013, upon his election as Pope, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina chose Francis as his papal name in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, becoming Pope Francis.

At his first audience on 16 March 2013, Pope Francis told journalists that he had chosen the name in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi, and had done so because he was especially concerned for the well-being of the poor. He explained that, as it was becoming clear during the conclave voting that he would be elected the new bishop of Rome, the Brazilian Cardinal Cláudio Hummes had embraced him and whispered, "Don't forget the poor", which had made Bergoglio think of the saint. Bergoglio had previously expressed his admiration for St. Francis, explaining that "He brought to Christianity an idea of poverty against the luxury, pride, vanity of the civil and ecclesiastical powers of the time. He changed history." Bergoglio's selection of his papal name is the first time that a pope has been named Francis.