

Saint Francis of Assisi – respect for all of God's creation



The early life of Francis

Saint Francis of Assisi was born around 1181 in the Italian town of Assisi. His father was a successful merchant, and Francis grew up in comfortable circumstances. As a young man, he enjoyed a carefree life and dreamed of achieving honour and success as a knight.

However, after experiencing war, imprisonment, and illness, Francis began to question the purpose of his life. Gradually, he realised that true happiness is not found in wealth, status, or personal ambition, but in serving God and others.

A radical change of life

Francis chose to leave behind his former way of life and dedicate himself completely to God.

He embraced a life of simplicity, poverty, and service. Rather than seeking privilege or

recognition, he devoted himself to helping the poor, the sick, and those whom society often overlooked.

One of the most famous moments in his life occurred when he encountered a man suffering from leprosy. At that time, lepers were often feared, rejected, and excluded from society. Instead of turning away, Francis approached the man, treated him with compassion, and cared for him.

This encounter transformed his life and taught him to recognise the dignity of every human being.

Respect for all people

Francis believed that every person possesses God-given dignity and deserves to be treated with respect.

He did not judge others by their wealth, social standing, nationality, or appearance. Whether speaking with rulers, merchants, peasants, or outcasts, he treated everyone with kindness and respect.

His attitude reflected a profound conviction: every human being is a child of God and worthy of love and consideration.

Responsibility for creation

Francis is also remembered for his deep appreciation of God's creation.

He saw nature as a gift entrusted to humanity and believed that people have a responsibility to care for it wisely.

His famous **Canticle of the Creatures** praises God for the sun, moon, water, animals, and all creation. This respect for creation flowed from his belief that everything ultimately belongs to God.

Francis teaches that responsibility includes caring not only for people, but also for the world entrusted to us.

Founder of the Franciscan Order

As more people were inspired by his example, Francis founded the **Order of Friars Minor**, commonly known as the Franciscans.

He encouraged his followers to live with humility, simplicity, and respect for others. Through their words and actions, they sought to bring peace, reconciliation, and hope wherever they went.

Francis led not through authority or power, but through personal example.

Why is Saint Francis venerated?

Saint Francis is honoured because he made the Gospel visible through his actions.

He demonstrated extraordinary respect for every person, care for creation, humility, and a deep sense of responsibility towards those entrusted to his care.

His life reminds us that true greatness is measured not by what we possess, but by how we serve others.

What can we learn from Saint Francis of Assisi?

Saint Francis remains a powerful role model, especially for military personnel.

His example reminds us that:

- Respect begins with recognising the dignity of every human being.
- Responsibility means caring for those entrusted to our care.
- Humility strengthens leadership.
- Service is more important than personal recognition.
- Peace and reconciliation require courage and commitment.

Military personnel often encounter people from different cultures, backgrounds, and circumstances. Respect, responsibility, and self-discipline are essential for building trust and safeguarding human dignity.

Saint Francis teaches that true strength is shown not through power alone, but through respect, compassion, responsibility, and service to others.

Feast Day

The feast day of **Saint Francis of Assisi** is **4 October**. He is honoured as the patron saint of ecology, animals, and the Franciscan Order, and remains one of Christianity's most beloved examples of humility, respect, and responsible service.