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Seasoning the Seasons™

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Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis of Assisi: October 4



Saint Francis was born in Assisi, in the Umbria region of Italy, in 1182. He was the son of Pietro Bernadone, a wealthy cloth merchant, and Madonna Pica. Did you know that Francis was originally named Giovanni, or John, by his mother? When his father, who was traveling at the time of his son's birth, returned home he changed his son's name to Francesco, or Francis.

Francis was a somewhat wild youth. He then served as a soldier, and was a prisoner of war during a war between Assisi and Perugia. He later wanted to be a knight and fight battles, but he experienced God calling him in a different direction. In fact, he became a pacifist, working for peace at all times.

Francis listened intently to God, and found God in all of creation. He renounced all wealth and embraced strict poverty. He heard God calling him to reform the Church. Francis came to obey God in all matters.

Living a humble and sincere life, Francis knew our actions speak louder than words. He said, *"Preach the gospel always; use words when necessary."* His lifestyle and sincerity attracted many followers. In 1209 he founded the Franciscan order.

All of creation was Francis's family. He wrote poems and songs, including the *Canticle of the Sun*. He loved the animals, and had a fascinating encounter with a wolf. Francis even preached to the birds!



Before his death, Francis received the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, in his own body. He died a natural death at sunset on October 3, 1226. Two years later he was canonized a Saint by Pope Gregory IX.

We celebrate the Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi each year on October 4. Saint Francis is the patron of many places, people, creatures, and causes. A few of these are Italy, San Francisco, animals, ecology, the environment, zoos, and merchants.

Celebrate the Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi, and learn more about Saint Francis and the Franciscans!

- ❖ Who is Saint Clare of Assisi? Who is Saint Anthony? Do you know any Franciscans?
- ❖ What is a San Damiano Crucifix? Have you seen one? Do you have one? Find out its symbolism.
- ❖ Did you know that most public libraries have numerous (often over 100) books about Saint Francis! There are many for all age groups. Visit your local library branch or web site and reserve a copy of a few. In the library's search engine, just type in the words "Saint Francis of Assisi".
- ❖ Many parishes celebrate the Blessing of Pets and Animals on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi. Find a Pet Blessing near you and plan to participate. You can attend even if you do not have a pet!