

## **FROM THE PASTOR'S OFFICE:** **St. Francis of Assisi, Renewer of the Church**

This month on October 4th we commemorate St. Francis of Assisi, who has enriched the lives of Christians for centuries. Francesco Bernardone was born in 1182 in the little Italian town of Assisi, he died October 4th, 1226. (Commemoration dates denote death dates.) By the time of his death he was among the most famous and beloved figures in the Church. Within two years, he had been canonized - named a saint.

Francis was a complicated man, and like all saints far from perfect. He was considered a romantic, known as a poet, a dreamer, a singer, a lover of nature. He is known as a reformer and a renewer of the church, a Christlike reminder of how Christians ought to love in the world with a surpassing love of Christ

One of his friends wrote in a biography that Francis' real name was Giovanni, but he got the nickname **Francesco** because his father wanted him to enjoy the popularity of French music, poetry and fashion. "Frenchy," his father called him.

Francis had a love for many thing including nature; he called all created things his brothers and sisters. His famous "Canticle of Brother Sun" praises God for creating our Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brother Wind and Sister Water, Brother Fire and Mother Earth, and even Brother Death. Once when some noisy birds were interfering with his preaching, he asked the birds to be quiet and listen, which they did. Francis picked up worms in the road and moved them to a safe place where they wouldn't get stepped on.

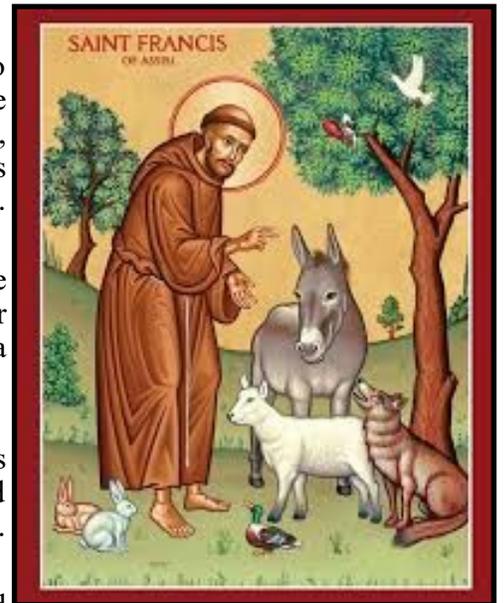
Francis grew up with wealth, in a world obsessed with wealth, power, prestige - and yet in the midst of the wealth he saw extreme poverty; he determined to spread the wealth. He became a friend of the poor. Renouncing his own wealth, and living with only rags and scraps. If he saw someone in need he would always give them what he had.

Still, the most important thing he as to teach us is about devotion to Christ. That's what explains everything else about Francis. Francis saw everything in relation to Jesus Christ. He didn't love nature or creatures for their own sake, he loved because God had created them. He didn't love beggars or lepers just to be sensational, he loved because Jesus loved beggars and lepers. He didn't humble himself and live in poverty just to make a point, he did because the Son of God had humbled himself and become lowly for our sake.

At the end of his life Francis saw a vision of Jesus, after which Francis found wounds in his hands, feet and side like the wounds Jesus suffered on the cross. His desire to be worthy of his Lord scarred him just as Christ was scarred for us. More than his scars, however, it's his vision that makes Francis remarkable: his vision of God, but also his ability to see the truth about things in the world. The beauty of his vision gave him joy in life; the truth of his vision made him an example and teacher for the ages.

The saints, we don't venerate them, or worship them, we don't need them as an intercessory for us with God ... but we have things to learn from them. From Francis, his love of music, nature, the world around him ... always giving credit to God for the gift of those things, his insistence in seeing Christ in those around him, especially the poor his devotion to living out his faith in every area of his life.

May we too be inspired to live out our faith - in every area of our lives. Amen



Continued Joy!! *Pastor Karen*