~~ Saint Francis of Assisi ~~



October 4th ~ Feast Day of Saint Francis

**Francis of Assisi was born in 1181, one of the children of an Italian father and a French mother,
He was an Italian mystic, poet and Catholic friar who founded the religious order of the Franciscans.
Inspired to lead a Christian life of poverty, he became a beggar and an itinerant preacher.
In one account, Francis 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 end 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 purse. Francis' friends mocked him for his charity while his father scolded him in rage.**

Around 1202, Francis joined a military expedition against Perugia and was taken as a prisoner at Collestrada. He spent a year as a captive, during which an illness caused Francis to re-evaluate his life. He returned to Assisi in 1203, two years later, he left for Apulia to enlist in the army of Walter III. A strange vision made him return to Assisi and lose interest in worldly life. A friend asked him whether he was thinking of marrying, to which Francis answered: "Yes, a fairer bride than any of you have ever seen", meaning his "Lady Poverty".

On a pilgrimage to Rome, Francis joined the poor in begging at St. Peter's Basilica. He spent some time in lonely places, asking God for divine illumination. Francis said that he had a mystical vision of Jesus Christ in the forsaken country chapel of San Damiano, just outside Assisi, in which the Icon of Christ Crucified said to him, "Francis, Francis, go and repair My church which, as you can see, is falling into ruins." Francis took this to mean the ruined church in which he was presently praying, so Francis sold some cloth taken from his father's store to assist the priest there. When the priest refused to accept the ill-gotten gains, an indignant Francis threw the coins on the floor.

For a couple of months, Francis wandered as a beggar in the hills behind Assisi. Over the course of two years, Francis embraced the life of a penitent, during which he restored several ruined chapels in the countryside around Assisi.

**Determined to bring the Gospel to all peoples and let God convert them, Francis sought on several occasions to take his message out of Italy. In 1211, Saint Francis of Assisi roamed those very paths of Agoncillo. In a saintly manner, he visited Medrano's Agoncillo castle, placed his mystical hands upon the ailing son of the captain of the Medrano family and miraculously healed him, securing the Medrano lineage in Agoncillo.
The Medrano family generously donated some land, as a gift to Saint Francis, where he established the first Spanish convent of his Order there.**

**While Francis was praying during a 40-day fast, he is said to have had a vision on September 17, 1224, following which Francis displayed stigmata resembling the wounds on the hands and feet of crucified Christ.
Brother Leo, who had been with Francis at the time, left a clear and simple account of the event. "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 to no avail. He began to go blind and the bishop of Ostia ordered that his eyes be operated on, which meant cauterizing the eyes with hot irons. Francis claims to have felt nothing at all when this was done. In the end, he was brought back to a hut next to the Porziuncola. Here, Francis spent his last days dictating his spiritual testament. Francis died on the evening of Saturday, October 3, 1226.**

On July 16, 1228, Francis was declared a saint by Pope Gregory IX. The next day, the pope laid the foundation stone for the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. Francis was buried on May 25, 1230, under the Lower Basilica, but his tomb was soon hidden. Francis' burial place remained unknown until it was rediscovered in 1818. It was refashioned between 1927 and 1930 into its present form. In 1978, the remains of 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. His skeleton was put on public display for the first time in 2026.

**On November 29, 1979, Pope John Paul II declared Francis the patron saint of ecology. On March 28, 1982, John Paul II said that 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, that Francis "invited all of creation – animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon – to give honor and praise to the Lord.
On March 13, 2013, upon his election as Pope, Archbishop and Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina chose Francis as his papal name in honor of Francis of Assisi, becoming Pope Francis.
It is the first time a pope has taken the name.**