



## St. Francis of Assisi

**Born:** 1181 Assisi, Duchy of Spoleto, Holy Roman Empire

**Died:** 3 October 1226 (aged 44 years) Assisi, Umbria, Papal States

**Venerated:** in Catholic Church, Anglican Communion, Lutheranism, Old Catholic Church

**Canonized:** 16 July 1228, Assisi, Papal States by Pope Gregory IX

**Major shrine:** Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi

**Feast day:** 4 October

Patronage: Franciscan Order, animals, merchants, ecology, stowaways, Naga, Cebu, and Italy. Against dying alone, against fire, animal welfare societies, animals, birds, ecologists, environment, environmentalism, environmentalists, families, lace makers, lace workers, merchants, needle workers, peace, tapestry workers, zoos, Italy, Colorado, Catholic Action, 10 dioceses, 10 cities.

Son of Pietro Bernadone, a rich cloth merchant. Though he had a good education and became part of his father's business, he also had a somewhat misspent youth. Street brawler and some-time soldier. Captured during a conflict between Assisi and Perugia, Italy, he spent over a year as a prisoner of war. During this time he had a conversion experience, including a reported message from Christ calling him to leave this worldly life. Upon release, Francis began taking his faith seriously.

He took the Gospels as the rule of his life, Jesus Christ as his literal example. He dressed in rough clothes, begged for his sustenance, and preached purity and peace. His family disapproved, and his father disinherited him; Francis formally renounced his wealth and inheritance. He visited hospitals, served the sick, preached in the streets, and took all men and women as siblings. He began to attract followers in 1209, and with papal blessing, founded the Franciscans based on a simple statement by Jesus: "Leave all and follow me." In 1212 Clare of Assisi became his spiritual student, which led to the founding of the Poor Clares. Visited and preached to the Saracens. Composed songs and

hymns to God and nature. Lived with animals, worked with his hands, cared for lepers, cleaned churches, and sent food to thieves. In 1221 he resigned direction of the Franciscans.

While in meditation on Mount Alvernia in the Apennines in September 1224, Francis received the stigmata, which periodically bled during the remaining two years of his life. This miracle has a separate memorial on 17 September.

In the Middle Ages people who believed to be possessed by Beelzebub especially called upon the intercession of Saint Francis, the theory being that he was the demon's opposite number in heaven.