

## Reflection Monday Week 27 St Francis of Assisi 2021

**St Francis (1181 - 1226)** was the son of a prosperous cloth merchant in Assisi. His father objected to his selling goods without his consent to restore a church. The bishop commanded Francis to repay the money. He did. He then renounced his father and gave back everything he had been given, even his clothes. He began a life of perfect evangelical poverty, living by begging and only accepting the worst food people gave him. He preached the love of God and creation. Having renounced everything, he celebrated everything he received, saw or heard as a gift. A rich man sold everything and a canon from a neighbouring church joined him. They responded to Jesus' call to sell everything and take nothing for the journey taking up the cross that Jesus offered them. On this basis they founded an order. Francis went to Rome to persuade the Pope to sanction it.

Because Francis wore an old brown garment begged from a peasant, tied with string, it became the Franciscan habit. Ten years later 5,000 men were wearing it; a hundred years later Dante was buried in it because it was more glorious than cloth of gold. Francis attempted to convert the Muslims or attain martyrdom doing so. He started the practice of making a crib in church to celebrate the Nativity. Francis died in 1226, having started a revolution.

He is an inspiration for all who work to heal our planet and reverse climate change. We rely on his prayerful support.

Francis is the patron saint of animals and the environment and is considered to be the original Earth Day advocate. Francis' devotion to God was expressed through his love for all of God's creation. He cared for the poor and sick, he preached sermons to animals and praised all creatures as brothers and sisters under God.

*"Hear our humble prayer, O God,  
for our friends the animals, your creatures.  
We pray especially for all who suffer:  
for the overworked and underfed,  
the hunted, lost, or hungry;  
for all in captivity or ill-treated,  
and for those being put to death.  
For those who deal with them,  
we ask a gentle heart of compassion,  
gentle hands, and kindly words.  
Make us true friends to animals  
and worthy followers of Jesus Christ.*