

Reflection Tuesday Week 27 St Francis of Assisi 2022

St Francis of Assisi (1181 - 1226) was the son of a prosperous cloth merchant in Assisi. When his father objected to having his goods sold without his consent to pay for the restoration of a church, the bishop commanded Francis to repay the money. He did. He then renounced his father and gave back everything he had ever been given, even his clothes. He began a life of perfect evangelical poverty, living by begging and only accepting the worst food that people had to give. He preached to all the love of God and of the created world. Having renounced everything, he celebrated everything he received, saw or heard as a gift. A rich man sold everything and joined him in living next to a leper colony; a canon from a neighbouring church gave up his position and joined them also. Seeing in the Gospel the story of the rich young man whom Jesus told to sell everything and telling his disciples to take nothing with them on their journey and that his followers must also carry his cross, they founded an order. Francis went to Rome and persuaded the Pope to sanction it, even though it seemed impractical and subversive, sending thousands of holy men wandering penniless around the towns and villages of Europe. Because Francis was wearing an old brown garment begged from a peasant, tied round the middle with string, that 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 tried to convert the Muslims or attain martyrdom in doing so. He started the practice of building a crib in church to celebrate the Nativity.

In his words:

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

Lord, help me to live this day, quietly, easily. To lean upon your great strength, trustfully, restfully. To wait for the unfolding of your will, patiently, serenely. To meet others, peacefully, joyously. To face tomorrow, confidently, courageously.

Do all you can to preach the gospel and, if necessary, use words!