



Sunday
October 6th 2024

Francis

The Season of CREATION:

Walking the Talk: Francis of Assisi

Breaking Open the Word



St Peter's by the Lake
PAYNESVILLE

Anglican Diocese of
Gippsland



**TO HOPE AND ACT
WITH CREATION**

SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:19-25)

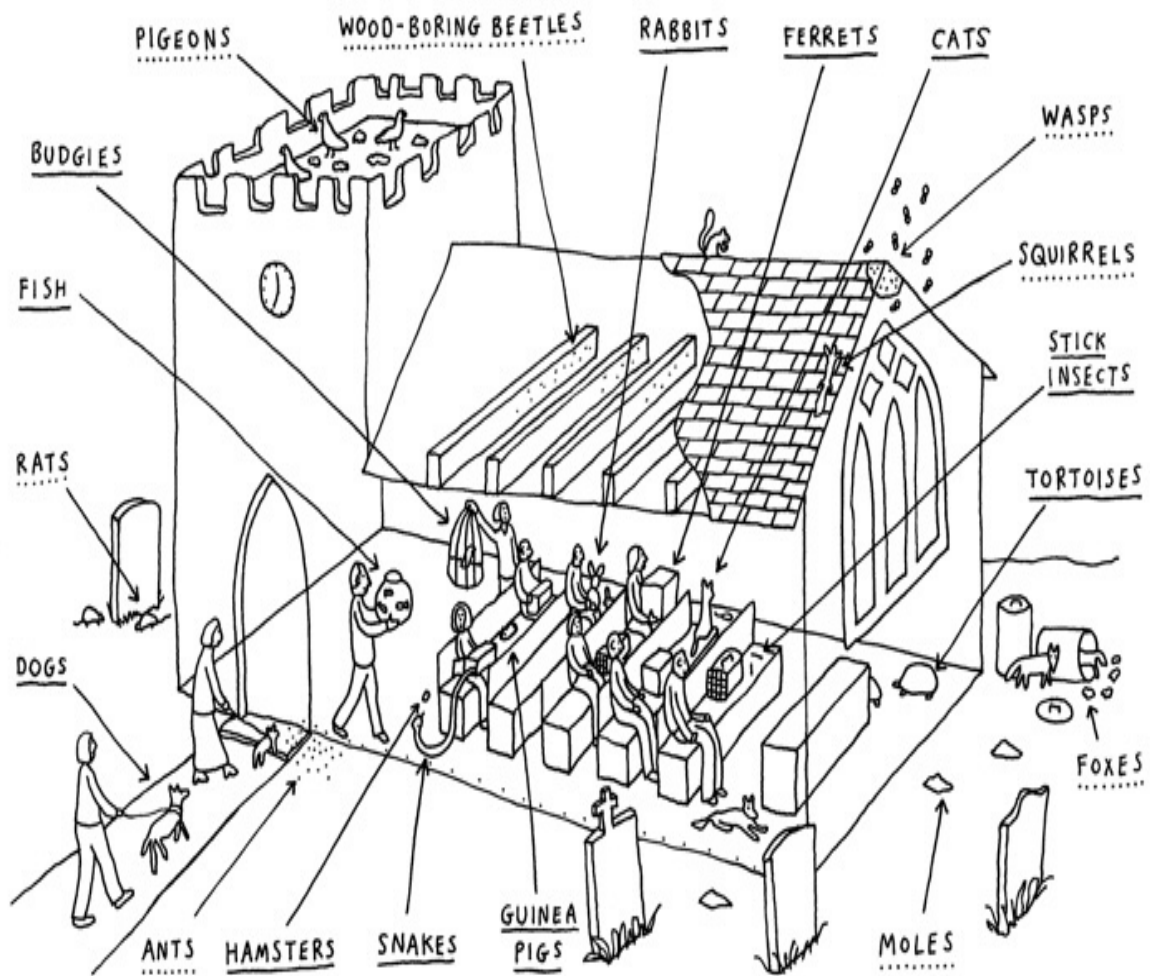


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ANIMALS



— THOSE WE HAVE INVITED
IN TO PARTICIPATE IN
OUR PET SERVICE

..... THOSE WE WOULD QUITE LIKE
TO BE ERADICATED BY THE
PEST-CONTROL PEOPLE

READINGS

Micah 6.6-8
Psalm 100
Galatians 6.14-end
Luke 12.22-34



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“

Consider the lilies,
how they grow

”

Luke 12. 27

O God, thou dost delight to
reveal thyself

to the childlike and lowly of
heart:

grant that, following the
example of the blessed
Francis,

we may count the wisdom
of this world as foolishness
and know only Jesus Christ
and him crucified,

who is alive and reigns with
you,

in the unity of the Holy
Ghost.

INTRODUCTION

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the life of Francesco, later known as St. Francis, drawing from historical accounts and the 1972 film “Brother Sun, Sister Moon.”

Born into a wealthy family in Italy, St. Francis initially led a life of luxury but underwent a significant transformation after experiencing a series of visions that prompted him to dedicate his life to God and the service of others.

He famously renounced his affluent lifestyle, lived a life of prayer and poise, and emphasised simplicity and charity. His journey included restoring the Church of St. Damiano and forming a community around him, which faced challenges from the local church authorities.

Central to the sermon is “lifestyle evangelism,” where actions speak louder than words. St. Francis

exemplified this principle by believing that one’s behaviour is a form of preaching, famously stating, “Preach the Gospel everywhere, and if necessary, use words.”

His commitment to living out the gospel daily was a powerful lesson in humility, service, and compassion.

The sermon concludes by encouraging the congregation to emulate St. Francis by embodying their faith through actions, advocating for a life devoted to caring for others and all of creation, thereby making their life a testament to God’s love.

Key Reflection Points

1. Transformation through Faith: St. Francis’ journey is one of radical transformation. Born into wealth, he abandoned his privileged lifestyle after divine visions, dedicating himself to God. His life exemplifies the power of faith to inspire profound change, moving from self-centeredness to a life of service and humility.
2. Lifestyle Evangelism: The sermon highlights St. Francis’ belief in “lifestyle evangelism”—the idea that actions speak louder than words. His well-known statement, “Preach the Gospel everywhere, and if necessary, use words,” reinforces that living a Christ-centred life is often more impactful than verbal preaching alone.
3. Simplicity, Charity, and Compassion: St. Francis’ life underscores the values of simplicity, charity, and compassion. By renouncing wealth and dedicating himself to others, he demonstrated that living out the Gospel in everyday actions is a profound expression of faith. The congregation is encouraged to follow his example, letting their deeds reflect God’s love in the world.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may be your eyes, ears, hands and voice.



Giovanni di Peitro di Bernardone was born in Italy in the year 1181. He was the son of a cloth merchant and was undoubtedly a much-loved member of the household initially. It seemed that his father, Giovanni, in trying to curry favour with his new (and third) wife from France, called him Francesco, hoping that when little Joe grew up and took the business, his name would open many trade options.

Like most kids born into a life of luxury, Little Joe was quite the lad. He didn't care too much about studying and the cloth trade but certainly knew how to dress and party and add to his dance card all the pretty and not-so-nice girls of Assisi. When war broke out between Assisi and Perugia, taken up by the social standing that a soldier would have with some of the more friendly girls of the town, Little Joe went to war.

Well, that did not go well, and one former US president would probably disown any hero status of Little Joe as he was captured and held hostage for an entire year in 1202. After recovering, he set out with the Papal armies, as there were a few good crusades. This time, he returned after a few days after God appeared to him in a vision.

A simple man, he adopted the name Francesco and engaged in his father's business for the next two years. Sadly, for Joe Senior, this was not to his liking. Continuing to receive visions, he started handing out the profits and clothing to the poor, eroding the business. Those familiar with the Zeffirelli film *Brother Son*, Sister Moon will recognise the moment Francis adopted the poor's clothing by stripping off at the Bishop's court and standing naked before the

people of Assisi.

This man began to live a prayer life and based everything on the gospel parables. He wasn't a man of learning, so he saw all he did as poetic and literal. He looked to the kingdom of God around him and saw God reflected in the simplicity of creation. He established a home, and taking the dream to "rebuild my Church", he restored St Damiano. Soon, a community began around him, and the poetry of prayer and service became his mantle. He lived and worked as a simple monk.

The 1972 Zeffirelli film, heavily drawing on the flower power movement of the mid-60s, certainly romanticised some of Francis and, later, Clare's activities. To have a flourishing community that was not part of the feudal Italian system was not welcome by the local bishop, and it soon became necessary for Francis to apply directly to Innocent III for protection and patronage, as this was not forthcoming but not stopped by the local bishop.

I recall some memorable lines in the film. The rebuilt Church of St Damiano was burnt down, and one of Francis' followers died in the blaze. Seeking an audience with the Pope, the film portrays Francis's anger at the luxury of the Papal Courts and begins to lecture the cardinals and Pope about the simplicity of gospel-based living. This ended with Francis and their followers being thrown out but later invited back by Innocent III, who, realising the simplicity of the gospel and the spread of charitable works, blessed the Order of Friars Minor. As a monastic movement, it was not necessary to be ordained, and even today, the Ecumenical Order



Feast of St. Francis

Image Credit: Kay Francis Berger, OSF

of St Francis has many third-order members who are not part of the live-in Franciscans.

One of the Cardinals in the film was heard musing about the disgusting sight of Innocent III kissing Francis's dirty feet: "Don't be alarmed. His Holiness knows what he is doing. This man will speak to the poor and bring them back to us."

Francis's work could be summarised as what some people today label lifestyle evangelism. This means walking the talk or practising what you preach.

'A famous story involves Francis asking one of the younger members of his brotherhood if he would like to go into town to preach. The young friar was very eager and quickly agreed to come with Francis. Francis and the young friar spent all day walking through the marketplaces, side streets, and even the fields. Finally, as the sun set, Francis and his young companion returned to where they began. The day's journey was now done. The young friar looked disappointed and said, "I thought we were going to preach today?" Francis replied, "My son, we have preached.

We were preaching while we were walking. We were seen by many, and our behaviour was closely watched. It is useless to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk!" Perhaps the most famous quote of Francis is, "Preach the Gospel everywhere, and if necessary, use words."



As a preacher, Francis lived out the Bible's words daily and in every aspect of life.

And so, walking and not talking, loving without conditions, giving life to prayer and reflection to God and creation were the hallmarks of the ever-increasing gospel. It was, like the Zefferilli film, counter-cultural. Fittingly, as we come to the end of the season of creation, we finish with St Francis. His view on creation is expressed in his canticles, especially Brother Sun and Sister Moon. The so-called Prayer of St Francis underpins the same simplicity, although Francis's writings and prayers rarely were directed at himself.

The song we all know and love probably originated around 1912, not 1220! It is

a good prayer commended by the Franciscans as a call to live a life of simplicity that cares for God and all creation. It reminds us all that being a steward of creation includes caring for all creatures, great and small.

One of St Francis' closest friends, St Giles of Assisi, wrote the following based on Francis's teachings; the message is pretty much the same.

"Blessed is he who loves and does not, therefore, desire to be loved;

Blessed is he who fears and does not, therefore, desire to be feared;

Blessed is he who serves and does not, therefore, desire to be served;

Blessed is he who behaves well toward others and does not desire that others behave well toward him;

And because these are great things, the foolish do not rise to them."

Like Francis, we are encouraged to follow Jesus, dedicate ourselves to poverty, work of care and compassion

for the poor, and preach the Word.

"What made Francis so appealing to the Europe of his time was more than his poetic style as a preacher; it was that his life was a poem for God. Modern-day preachers would benefit from pondering Francis' success not on the merit of his sermon outlines but rather the context he provided for every one of his sermons, which was his very own life fully dedicated to Christ."

So, said, simply led: walk the talk. And if you need to use words, do so sparingly.



Tertiary Order of Saint Francis

A Welcoming Community

"The Order sets out, in the name of Christ, to break down barriers between people and to seek equality for all. We accept as our second aim the spreading of a spirit of love and harmony among all people. We are pledged to fight against the ignorance, pride and prejudice that breed injustice or partiality of any kind". Principles Day 7.

"Members of the Third Order fight against all injustice, in the name of Christ in whom there can be neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for in him all are one. Our chief object is to reflect that openness to all which was characteristic of Jesus". Principles Day 8.

The Third Order is an inclusive community where ALL who are called by God to follow Jesus in the Franciscan way are welcome to explore this vocation.

Early in his ministry Francis of Assisi recognised the need to include within his movement of reform and renewal people who lived the common life. The work of following Christ in simplicity, love and joy could not be restricted to the traditional religious life of the Friars and Sisters.

This was true in the twelfth century and it remains so today; it is the vocation of all Christians.

THE THIRD ORDER consists of any people, men or women, married or single, priests or laity; who though following the ordinary professions of life feel called to a life-long dedication under a definite discipline and vows.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Question 1

How does the life of Francis demonstrate the concept of 'walking the talk' in your understanding of faith?

The sermon discusses how Francis lived out his faith through his actions rather than words, emphasising the importance of practising what you preach.

What specific actions can you take in your life to better demonstrate your beliefs?

Question 2

In what ways do you think simplicity, as exhibited by Francis, can impact our relationship with God and others?

The sermon highlights Francis' simplicity in his lifestyle and how it reflected his deep connection with creation and God.

What areas in your life where simplifying might help you focus more on your relationships and faith?

Question 3

What does the quote 'Preach the Gospel everywhere, and if necessary, use words' mean to you?

This quote from Francis points to the idea that our actions can convey our beliefs more powerfully than our words.

How can you embody this quote daily, especially at school or with friends?

Question 4

How does the concept of lifestyle evangelism, as explained in the sermon, differ from traditional preaching?



The sermon describes lifestyle evangelism as living out the gospel through actions and behaviour rather than only through spoken messages.

Have you ever experienced someone sharing their faith through their actions? How did it impact you?

Question 5

What characteristics made Francis' life appealing to people during his time?

The sermon suggests that people were drawn to Francis because of his style and life dedicated to living out the gospel he was preaching.

Consider someone you admire for their faith or values. What qualities do they have that inspire you

End notes and further reading

(A JOINT MESSAGE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CREATION, The Holy See, 2021)

Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Canterbury
Release Joint Statement on Care for Creation – Millennial.

<https://millennialjournal.com/2021/09/09/pope-francis-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-archbishop-of-canterbury-release-joint-statement-on-care-for-creation/>

Kevin Goodrich, <https://www.preaching.com/articles/past-masters/francis-of-assisi/>

Giles of Assisi (1907) [orig. 13th century]. The Golden Sayings of Blessed Brother Giles. Translated by Robinson, Paschal. Dolphin Press. p. 5.



Brabarlung Totem
This is produced on
Gunaikurnai Land, and our
respects are paid to the First
Nations people everywhere.



Walking the Talk

5 Day Devotional

This five-day devotional will explore the sermon from this weekend, exploring St. Francis' life and teachings and how his example encourages us to embody the gospel in our daily actions.

Day 1

Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your light shine before others so they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. This scripture encapsulates the essence of living out our faith not just in words but through our actions. St. Francis exemplified this principle by demonstrating a life of simplicity and service, allowing his life to speak volumes about his love for God and creation. As we reflect on his journey, we are reminded that our behaviour serves as a testimony to those around us, reflecting the light of Christ in a world that often seeks clarity in obscurity.

The story of St. Francis challenges us to consider how we can embody this principle in our everyday lives. Whenever we choose to serve others, love unconditionally, or practice humility, we emulate the actions of Jesus. These acts fulfil our calling to be lights in a dark world. When we let our good deeds shine, we inspire others to seek the Father, encouraging a community built on faith, love, and compassion.

- What practical ways can I let my light shine in my community?
- How does my behaviour reflect my faith in Christ?
- In what areas do I struggle to live out my faith through action?
- Please pray for guidance to see opportunities for service around you.
- I'd like you to reflect on ways to embody humility and love in your relationships.

Day 2

Luke 9:23

Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." This scripture calls us to a radical lifestyle of self-denial and dedication, much like that of St. Francis. He surrendered his comfortable life and embraced a life of poverty for the gospel's sake. This faithfulness illustrates the call to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, even when it requires sacrifice. As we follow the path of discipleship, we, too, are invited to examine our lives and what we may need to set aside to pursue Him fully.

This spiritual journey involves daily choices that align with Jesus' teachings. To take up our cross means embodying love, service, and humility in our interactions. St. Francis's life reminds us that our commitment to Christ should be evident in how we live, connect, and serve others. We draw closer to God's heart of selflessness and fulfil our mission as His disciples every moment.

- What does it mean for me to take up my cross daily?
- What comforts or distractions am I willing to set aside for the sake of my faith?
- How can I become a more devoted disciple of Christ?
- Pray for courage to embrace the challenges of discipleship.
- Seek God's wisdom in areas where self-denial may be needed.

Day 3 Philippians 2:3-4

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your interests but each of you to the interests of the others." St. Francis lived this out profoundly by dedicating his life to serving people experiencing poverty and caring for creation. His humility and selfless love offer a model for us as we seek to reflect Christ's love in our daily lives. In placing others before ourselves, we create an environment where love flourishes and God's kingdom manifests.

Humility is often countercultural, yet St. Francis demonstrated that it is foundational to a life rooted in Christ. By valuing others, we foster genuine relationships that can lead others to Christ through our actions. The call to live humbly aligns us with God's heart, allowing us to participate in His mission of bringing hope and love to a broken world. In doing so, we find that our lives become a testament to God's grace as we love and serve one another fervently.

- How can I intentionally value the needs and interests of others in my daily life?
- In what ways can humility change my interactions with family and friends?
- What steps can I take to cultivate a posture of humility in my heart?
- Pray for opportunities to serve others with humility and grace.
- I'd like you to reflect on specific relationships where you can practice selflessness.

Day 4 Romans 12:1

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, given God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." The essence of true worship extends beyond songs sung on Sundays; it encompasses the entirety of our lives as living sacrifices. St. Francis epitomised this view by transforming his existence into an act of worship through his service to others and creation. His life beckons us to truly explore the depths of what it means to worship God through our daily encounters.

When we see our actions as expressions of worship, we understand that every small act of kindness and every moment of compassion can reflect God's love. This perspective invites us to live passionately for Him each day. We surrender our desires and ambitions for God's greater purposes by offering ourselves as living sacrifices. This alignment with His heart empowers us to live a life honouring God, demonstrating the transformative power of gospel-centred living.

- How do I currently view my life as an act of worship to God?
- What sacrifices is God asking me to make in my daily life?
- In what areas can I intentionally practice offering my life as worship?
- Pray for a deeper understanding of true worship in your daily life.
- I'd like you to reflect on ways to integrate worship into your routine.

Day 5 Galatians 5:13

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love." Freedom in Christ opens the door to a life dedicated to serving others, which is beautifully highlighted in the life of St. Francis. Rather than living for self-indulgence, Francis chose a path of love and service, impacting countless lives. His legacy compels us to consider utilising our freedom in Christ to serve those around us and promote unity within our communities.

Service rooted in love transforms relationships and fosters more profound connections with others. St. Francis reminds us that true freedom expresses itself not in selfishness but through acts of love and kindness. As we dedicate ourselves to serving one another, we reflect the heart of Christ and attract others to the faith. Embracing this call takes us beyond our comfort zones yet opens a pathway to experience God's love through the lives we touch.

- How can I use my freedom in Christ to serve those in my community?
- How can I cultivate a heart of humility as I serve others?
- What are the barriers preventing me from serving others wholeheartedly?
- Pray for a heart ready to serve and love unconditionally.
- Reflect on how God is calling you to serve in your everyday life.

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