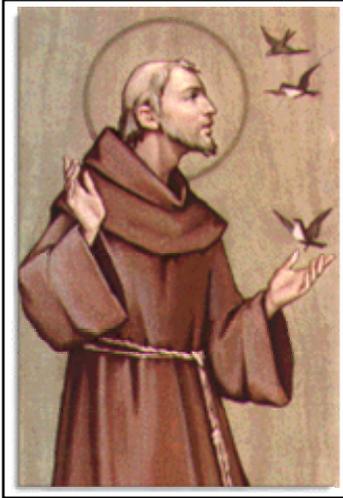


“St. Francis of Assisi: 1181-1226”

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY:



Francis was born at Assisi in Umbria in 1181 or 1182. His father, Piero Bernardone, was a prosperous merchant, and Francis planned to follow him in his trade, although he also had dreams of being a troubadour or a knight. In 1201 he took part in an attack on Perugia, was taken hostage, and remained a captive there for a year. As a result of his captivity and a severe illness his mind began to turn to religion, but around 1205 he enlisted in another military expedition, to Apulia. However, he had a dream in which God called him to his service, and he returned to Assisi and began to care for the sick. In 1206, he had a vision in which Christ called him to repair His Church. Francis interpreted this as a command to repair the church of San Damiano, near Assisi. He resolved to become a hermit, and devoted himself to repairing the church. His father, angry and embarrassed by Francis' behavior, imprisoned him and brought him before the bishop as disobedient. Francis abandoned all his rights and possessions, including his clothes. Two years later he felt himself called to preach, and was soon joined by companions. When they numbered eleven he gave them a short Rule and received approval from pope Innocent III for the brotherhood, which Francis called the Friars Minor.

The friars returned to Assisi and settled in huts at Rivoreto near the Porziuncula. They travelled throughout central Italy and beyond, preaching for people to turn from the world to Christ. In his life and preaching, Francis emphasized simplicity and poverty, relying on God's providence rather than worldly goods. The brothers worked or begged for what they needed to live, and any surplus was given to the poor. Francis turned his skills as a troubadour to the writing of prayers and hymns. In 1212 Clara Sciffi, a girl from a noble family of Assisi, left her family to join Francis. With his encouragement she founded a sisterhood at San Damiano, the Poor Ladies, later the Poor Clares. In 1219 Francis joined the crusaders and preached to the Sultan of Egypt.

Francis did not wish to found an 'order', but in time the brotherhood became more organized. As large numbers of people, attracted to the preaching and example of Francis, joined him, Francis had to delegate responsibility to others. Eventually he wrote a more detailed Rule, which was further revised by the new leaders of the Franciscans. He gave up leadership of the Order and went to the mountains to live in secluded prayer. There he received the Stigmata, the wounds of Christ. He returned to visit the Franciscans, and Clara and her sisters, and a few of his followers remained with him. He died at the Porziuncula on October 3, 1226.

Francis...worked to care for the poor, and one of his first actions after his conversion was to care for lepers. Thousands were drawn to his sincerity, piety, and joy. In all his actions, Francis sought to follow fully and literally the way of life demonstrated by Christ in the Gospels.

SOURCE: "Great People of History Bookstore, St. Francis of Assisi",
<http://members.aol.com/JAMIETAMPA/Francis/biography2.htm>

Question:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the key beliefs of St. Francis toward nature and even death?
Document #1	
<p>O most high, almighty, good Lord God, to thee belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing! Praised be my Lord God with all his creatures, and specially our brother the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light; fair is he and shines with a very great splendor: O Lord, he signifies to us thee!</p> <p>Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon, and for the stars, the which he has set clear and lovely in heaven.</p> <p>Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind, and for air and cloud , calms and all weather by which thou upholdest life in all creatures.</p> <p>Praised be my Lord for our sister water, who is very serviceable unto us and humble and precious and clean.</p> <p>Praised be my Lord for our mother earth, the which doth sustain us and keep us, and bringeth forth diverse fruits and flowers of many colors and grass.</p> <p>Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon one another for his love's sake, and who endure weakness and tribulation; blessed are they who peaceably shall endure, for thou, O most Highest, shall give them a crown.</p> <p>Praised be my Lord for our sister, the death of the body, from which no man escapeth. Woe to him who dieth in mortal sin! Blessed are they who are found walking by thy most holy will, for the second death shall have no power to do them harm.</p> <p>Praise ye and bless the Lord, and give thanks unto him and serve him with great humility.</p>	
SOURCE: St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Sun." early 13.	

Questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can ideals be so high that they threaten the well-being of an institution? ▪ What would have happened to the church if all clergy, including the Pope, had lived a life of poverty, begging, and working with their hands, as the Rule of Saint Francis instructs? ▪ What provisions are there in the Rule to assure the Pope of the order's loyalty?
Document #2	
<p>This is the rule and way of living of the Minorite brothers, namely, to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, without personal possessions, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to our lord Pope Honorius, and to his successors who...enter upon their office, and to the Roman Church. And the other brothers shall be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.</p> <p>I firmly command all the brothers by no means to receive coin or money, of themselves or through an intervening person. But for the needs of the sick and for clothing the other brothers, the ministers alone and the guardians shall provide through spiritual friends, as it may seem to them that necessity demands, according to time, place, and the coldness of the temperature. This one thing being always borne in mind, that, as has been said, they receive neither coin nor money.</p> <p>Those brothers to whom God has given ability to labor shall do so faithfully and devoutly, but in such manner that idleness, the enemy of the soul, being averted, they may not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, to which other temporal things should be subservient. As a reward, moreover, for their labor, they may receive for themselves and their brothers the necessities of life, but no coin or money; and this humbly, as becomes the servants of God and the followers of most holy poverty.</p> <p>The brothers shall appropriate nothing to themselves, neither a house, nor a place, nor anything; but as pilgrims and strangers in this world, in poverty and humility serving God, they shall confidently go seeking for alms. Nor need they be ashamed, for the Lord made Himself poor for us in this world.</p>	
SOURCE: The Rule of St. Francis of Assisi, 1223.	