

Oct 2, 2022
Feast of St. Francis

In the name of God, Abba-Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

A passage about Saint Francis, from one of the 'brothers' over the years.

Francis actually saw himself as the son of the Heavenly Father. God was in a very real sense, his beginning and his end. Francis' life is a poetic madness, a perpetual intoxication with Divine Love. For a whole week, Francis delighted in the song of a cicada. Would you just close your eyes for a moment? Just you, this is very brief, nothing threatening. Just close your eyes. I'd like you to think, what it's like to be on day three or four of listening to a cicada. Mmmm. That's love.

Francis' eyes were clear and deep like those of a child. He penetrated to the innermost secrets, those things that God conceals from the wise and reveals to the humble. The thing that distinguishes Francis in his age and in every age is his complete originality. He despises nothing. He is indifferent to nothing. He loves everything.

A flower throws him into ecstasy. In nature, he sees everything as his brothers and sisters. Everything for him prompts beauty So it is that the main theme for Francis is the same as it was for Jesus--the birds, the birds of the air. Look at them. Do you want to see a choice life? For a bird has no barn. It sings without ceasing; it lives by God's grace. And it wants for nothing. Shouldn't we?

It's very hard to see saints--because we polish them like trophies and put them on the shelf. Do you recall that Martin Luther King was considered the most dangerous man in America by the FBI for years? No, we forgot that, didn't we? He was always a nice guy... Wow.

So the same with Francis and his originality. The core of his spirituality was kindness. That didn't used to be a big deal to us, was it? Today it's everything. We're constantly proclaiming it. The Dalai Lama is proclaiming it--'*People, be kind!*'--because we're nowhere near it. Francis was kind to every person, to every creature, to everything. He lived in relationship with everything. And that simply prompts kindness. All was divinely inspired. All

divinely created-- every stick and stone, stream, cloud, the weather itself, slugs, ants, children, were sources of beauty and love and delight.

It was this simple: if you love the Creator, love the creation.
Any questions? That's it, that's it! Love it into wholeness, love it into beauty, love it into...what we're meant to become.

Another word for that is--simply kinship. To welcome with gratitude the other: the other person, the other creature, the sentient being. So, simply welcome. And this is where all the legends about Francis and the animals come from. They're simply highlighting all the love in his heart for the wholeness of creation.

So, he would preach to the swallows. Sometimes, you know, in late afternoon, and they're in their feeding frenzy, and he would say, *'Friends, please some silence. You've gotten your turn. Now it's mine. Let me preach.'*

That's relationship--and we go, 'That's a little weird, isn't it?' I get that. It's weird for me too, but... he would go to the graveyard to preach to the buzzards. *'Oh, if you only knew how poorly the rich treat the poor. If they were just act with some kindness, the graveyard would be a lot smaller.'*

He was always preaching to the birds and the wolves, and all the creatures. To the birds he'd say, *'Remember, remember to praise. Don't forget, don't forget to praise! Otherwise, you'll forget how to fly.'* Who do you think he was preaching to?

Don't forget to praise. That is absolutely the hardest thing for human beings to do. We can go through 17 years of war. We can commit ourselves to tough families. We can engage the most obnoxious tasks, but praise... Wow! Look at the birds of the air--no barns, no promises, no security. Every day. Crazy.

If you love the Creator, love the creation.

Saint Francis is now the patron saint of ecology. All right, that has been clearly established by the Catholic Church. It's fantastic, because we need a wise guide for these times, and it's really important for two reasons. The first is after the floods in Florida and Pakistan, the eco-crisis has arrived.

Our projections had it 30 years away, in 2050. You know that, don't you? It's here. And we need all the wisdom that we can get. Now he's showing us the way to live into and live through the most overwhelming crisis of our planet.

The second thing is that both religion and science have been based on a terribly faulty foundation, an unhealthy dualism. So, in religion, and in particular Christianity, we've made it appear that you can conquer anything you want. *'Go ahead--dominate whoever you wish and feel free to exploit the earth. No consequences.'* That is not what the texts have said, but that has been the practice, hasn't it? For centuries, the justification of exploitation.

Now science has also got its own version. Here we are in the realm of artificial intelligence, and information technology, and the movement of transhumanism, which promises us--to save us from the world and the earth. If we just get the right science, the right technology, the right mechanisms we'll be able to live beyond suffering. We're even looking at the possibility of living beyond death. Did you know that? We're going to fix it, friends, because the last thing you want is to be part of this terribly messy world (which Dr. Josie [Thompson] was just speaking about). Forget the web of life. Forget interrelationships. Forget the wholeness. Let's have it--pure, clean, world. Science, religion coming from the same place? I thought they were different, didn't you?

Saint Francis would have none of this. None of it, and that's why he's a revolutionary, saying the way through, friends, is to be kind to every creature, and person, and being. Respect all life. Live in equality with every being so that the wholeness of life might rise up again.

Now, the truth is that Francis, and his inspiration, Jesus, have failed...miserably. But, we get to create the next chapter—
Love Everything.

Amen.

The peace, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.