

Holy Helpers

St. Francis

The Friend of Animals

Stories of Gentle Kindness



Catholic Sunday School



This book belongs to:

Meet St. Francis!



St. Francis lived in Italy about 800 years ago. He loved Jesus with all his heart — and he loved everything God made!

He called every creature "Brother" or "Sister"!

Come Along to Italy!

Let's follow St. Francis and meet his animal friends.



Brother Sun,
Sister Moon



The First
Christmas Crib



Francis's
Animal Friends



The Boy from
Assisi



The Birds Who
Listened



Brother Wolf
of Gubbio

Story 1

The Boy from Assisi

📍 Assisi, Italy · about 1200



Long ago, in a sunny town called Assisi, lived a young man named Francis. His father sold beautiful cloth. Francis loved bright clothes, music, and parties — he was the happiest singer in town!

One day, Francis went to pray in an old, crumbly little church called San Damiano. As he looked up at the painted cross, he heard Jesus say, "Francis, go and repair My house."



Francis, go and
repair My house.

So Francis fixed the little church, stone by stone. He gave away his fancy clothes and wore a plain brown robe tied with a rope. Now his greatest treasure was God — and God's whole wonderful world!



LET US PRAY

Jesus, help me love You more than any toy or treasure.

Story 2

The Birds Who Listened

📍 near Bevagna, Italy · about 1213



One day, Francis was walking along a country road with his friends. The trees were full of birds — chirping, fluttering, and singing! “Wait here,” said Francis. “I want to talk to my little sisters, the birds.”

"My little sister birds," said Francis, "God gave you soft feathers, strong wings, and lovely songs, and He feeds you every day. So always sing thank you to God!" The birds hopped close, stretched their necks, and listened.



Francis made the sign of the cross, and up flew the birds, singing a beautiful song! They flew north, south, east, and west — like a cross across the sky.

Painted 700 years ago!



St. Francis and the birds, in Assisi



LET US PRAY

Thank You, God, for every bird and every happy song!

Story 3

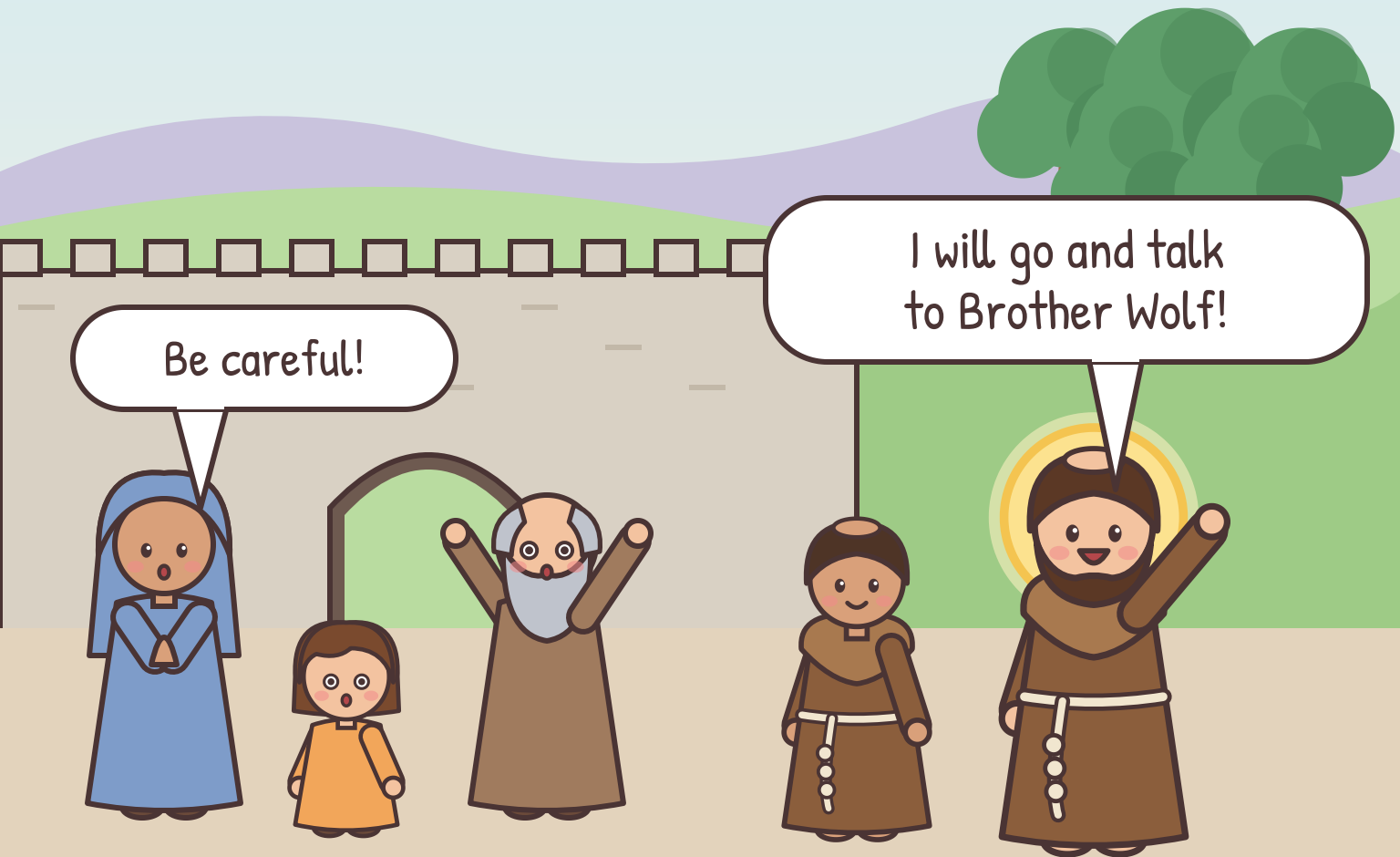
Brother Wolf of Gubbio

📍 Gubbio, Italy · about 1220



Gubbio was a pretty town on a green hill. In the woods nearby lived a big gray wolf. He was so hungry that he took the farmers' sheep, and the people were afraid to go outside the town walls.

When Francis came to Gubbio, the people told him all about the wolf. Francis smiled. "I will go and talk to Brother Wolf," he said. The people were worried, but Francis trusted God, and off he went.



Out of the woods came the wolf, running fast with his mouth wide open – **GRRR!** Francis stood very still and made the sign of the cross. “Come here, Brother Wolf,” he said gently. “In the name of Jesus, please don’t hurt anyone.”

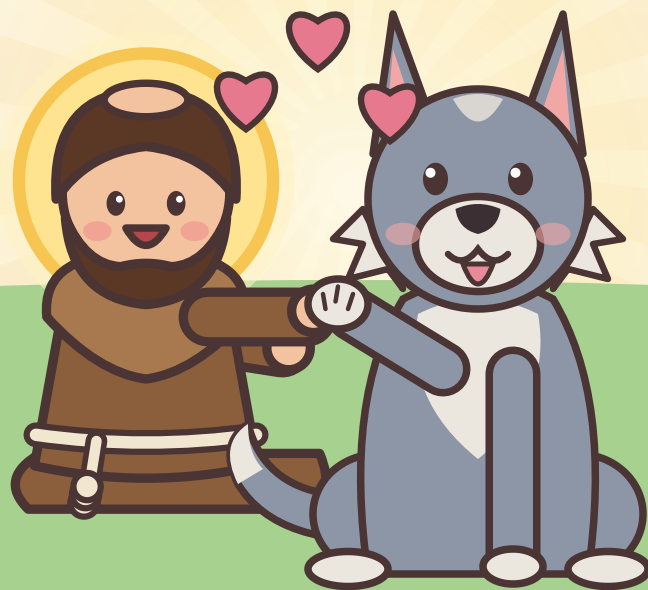


The wolf stopped. He closed his mouth, walked slowly to Francis, and lay down at his feet — as gentle as a little lamb! “**Brother Wolf,**” said Francis, “**you took the sheep because you were hungry. If you make peace, the people will feed you every day.**”

Brother Wolf, let's
make peace.

"Will you promise to be friends?" asked Francis, holding out his hand. The wolf wagged his tail and bowed his head... then he put his big paw right into Francis's hand!

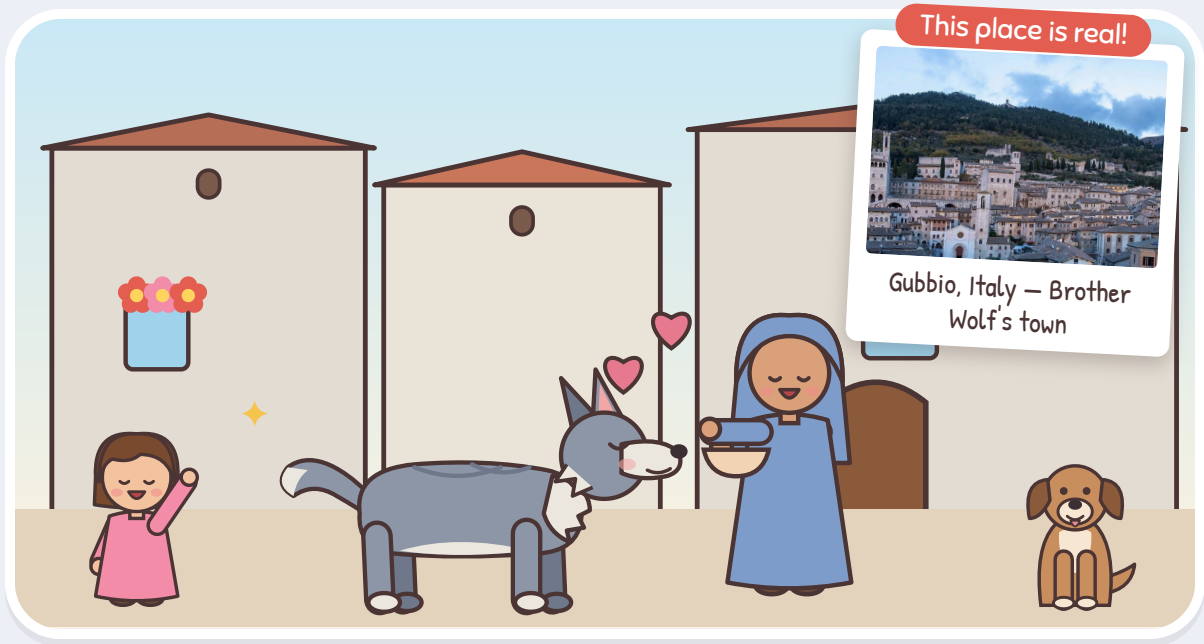
A promise!



Francis and the wolf walked into town together, and everyone came running to the square. In front of all the people, the wolf gave his paw again — and the people promised to feed him every day. Hooray for Brother Wolf!



From then on, Brother Wolf lived in Gubbio like a friendly neighbor. He went from door to door, and the people gave him food. Even the dogs didn't bark at him! Gentle kindness had turned a fierce wolf into a friend.

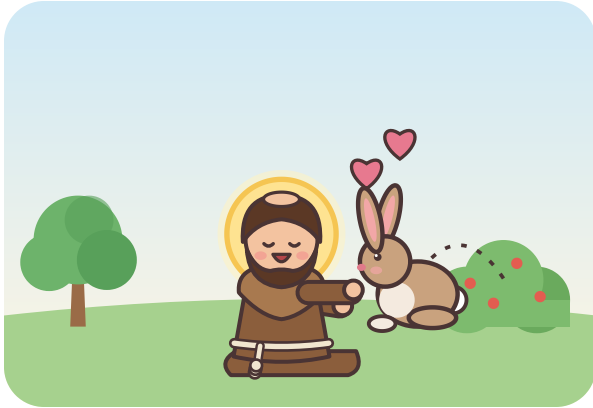


LET US PRAY

St. Francis, help me make peace with gentle words.

Story 4

Francis's Animal Friends

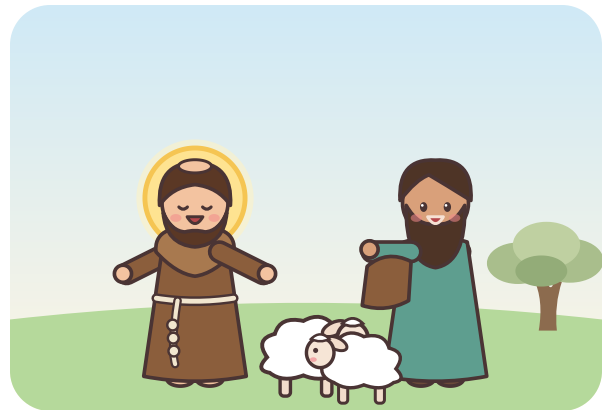


The Little Rabbit

Someone brought Francis a little rabbit that was caught in a trap. Francis gently set it free — but the rabbit hopped right back into his lap! It wanted to stay with its kind friend.

Two Little Lambs

Francis met a man carrying two little lambs to market. Francis gave the man his own warm cloak for them, and asked him to take good care of the lambs always.





Brother Fish

On a lake, a fisherman gave Francis a big fish. Francis put it back in the water — and the fish swam and splashed beside his boat until Francis waved goodbye.

Sister Cicada

A cicada sang in a fig tree near Francis's home. When Francis called her, she hopped onto his finger, and they sang praises to God together!





Brother Falcon

High on a mountain, a falcon woke Francis each night when it was time to pray. When Francis was tired, the kind falcon let him sleep a little longer!

Busy Bees and Little Worms

In winter, Francis set out honey so the bees would not go hungry. He even moved little worms off the path, so no one would step on them!



LET US PRAY

Dear God, help me be gentle with every creature You made.

Story 5

The First Christmas Crib

📍 Greccio, Italy · Christmas 1223



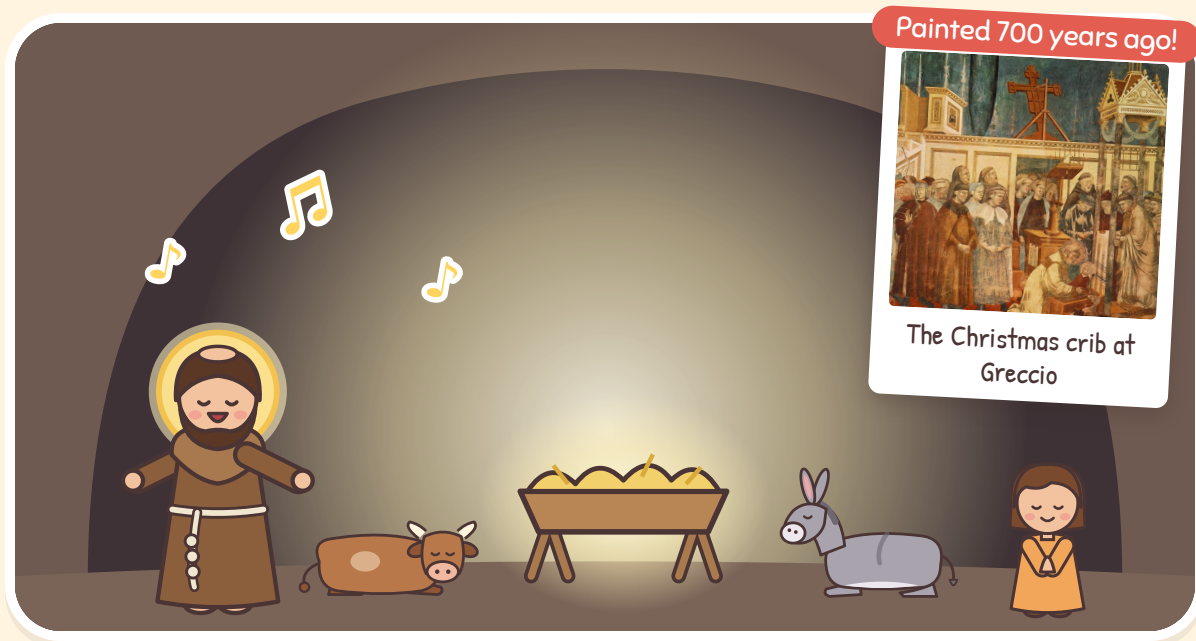
Francis wanted everyone to see how small and poor Baby Jesus was when He was born in Bethlehem. So he asked his friend John in the town of Greccio to help:

"Bring a manger, some hay, an ox, and a donkey!"

On Christmas Eve, people climbed the hill carrying candles and torches, and the night sparkled like day! There in a cave was the manger filled with hay, with a real ox and a real donkey — just like in Bethlehem.



Mass was celebrated right there by the manger, and Francis sang about the Baby of Bethlehem with so much joy! Ever since, families all over the world set up a Christmas crib — just like Francis did.



LET US PRAY

Baby Jesus, thank You for coming to us. We love You!

Story 6

Brother Sun, Sister Moon

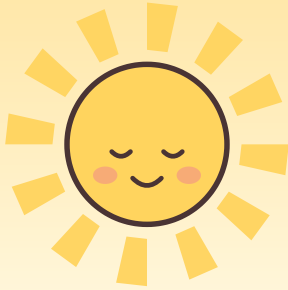
📍 San Damiano, Assisi • 1225



When Francis was older, he made up a happy song thanking God for everything He made. He called the sun his brother and the moon his sister! His song is called the **Canticle of the Creatures**.

Praised be You, my Lord!

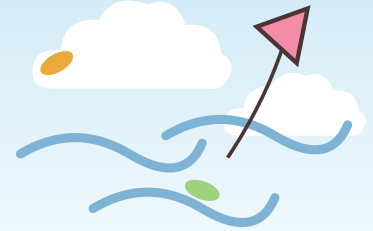
Francis thanked God for...



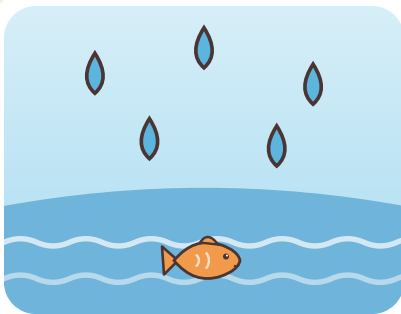
Brother Sun
bright and beautiful



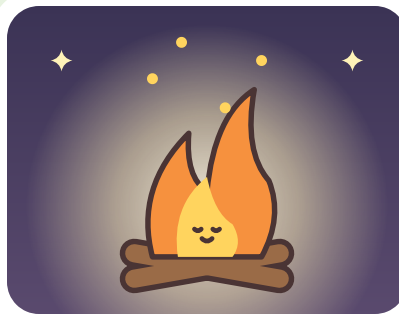
Sister Moon
and the twinkling stars



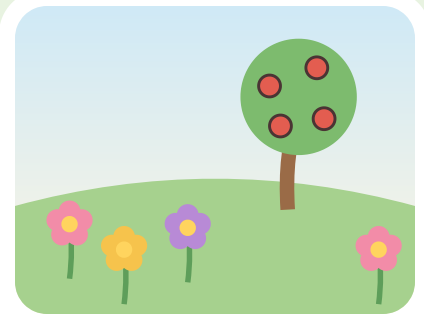
Brother Wind
and the clouds and sky



Sister Water
so fresh and pure

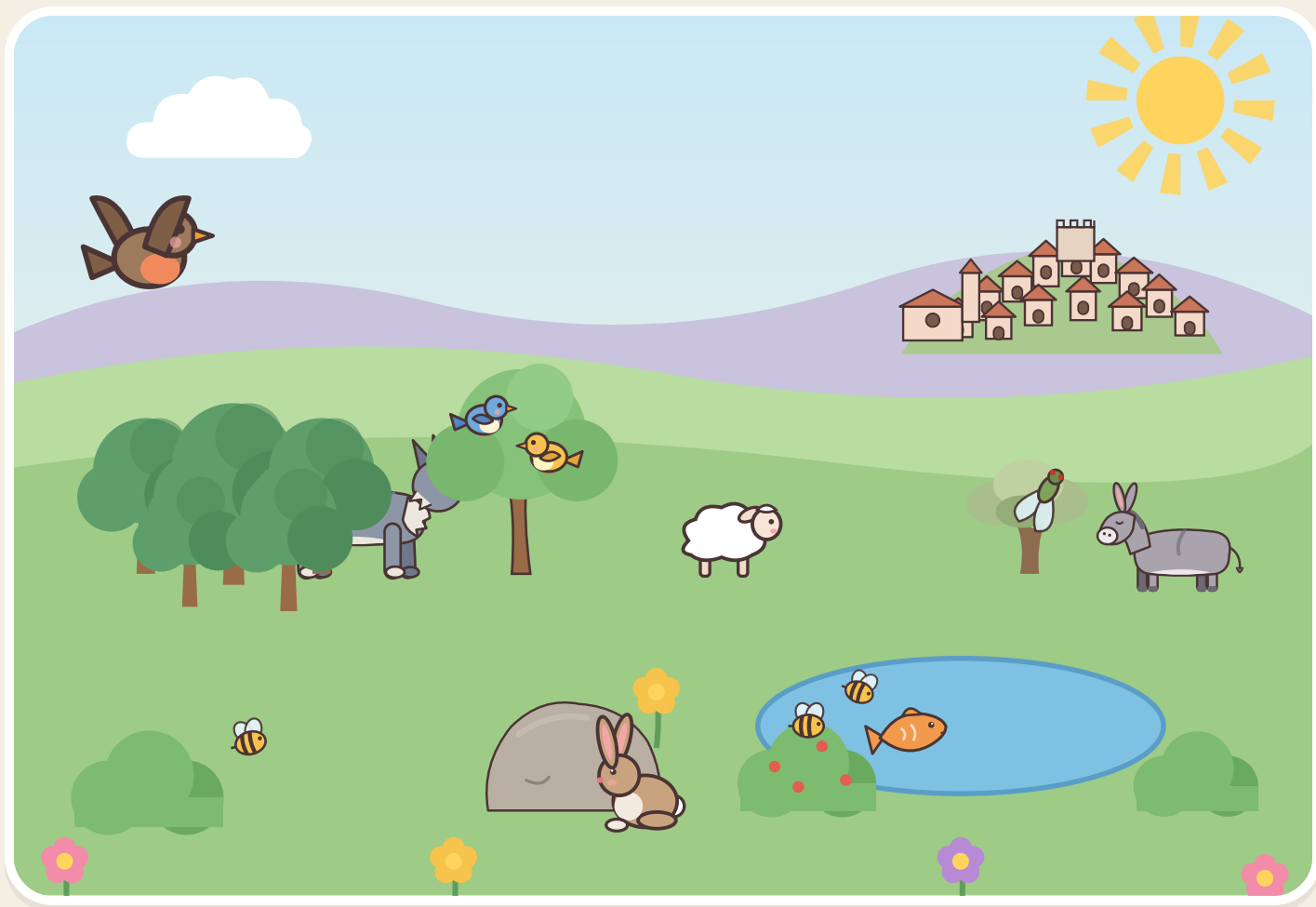


Brother Fire
cozy, bright, and strong



Mother Earth
with fruit and flowers

Can You Find Francis's Friends?



1 Brother
Wolf



3 birds



1 rabbit



1 lamb



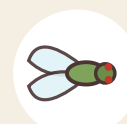
1 fish



1 donkey



3 bees



1 cicada

St. Francis's Special Day

October

4

This place is real!



St. Francis's church in
Assisi

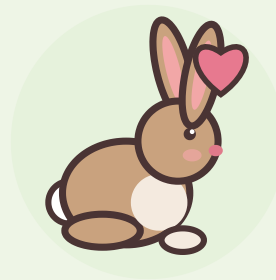
On St. Francis's feast day, many churches have a **Blessing of the Animals**. Families bring their dogs, cats, birds — even goldfish — to be blessed!



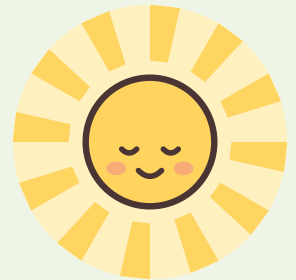
Bring your pet to
be blessed



Make a bird feeder



Be gentle with
animals



Thank God for His
creation



St. Francis's Song of Thanks

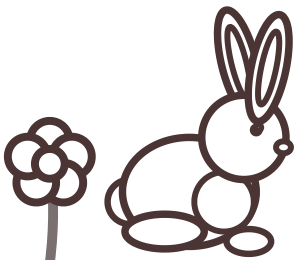
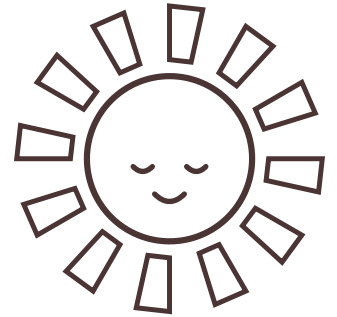
From his Canticle of the Creatures

Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Brother Sun, who brings us the day — so bright and beautiful! Praised be You, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars, so clear and lovely. Praised be You, my Lord, for Brother Wind, Sister Water, and Brother Fire, and for Mother Earth, who gives us fruit and colorful flowers. Amen.

A little prayer for little ones

Dear God, You made the bird and bee,
the wolf, the lamb, and even me!
Help me be gentle, kind, and true,
and care for all things made by You. Amen.

Color St. Francis and His Friends!



Every creature is a gift from God!



St. Francis showed us that gentle kindness is stronger than anger. When you are kind to people and to animals, you are a friend just like St. Francis!

St. Francis, pray for us. Help us love everything God has made.
Amen.

For Grown-Ups

Where these stories come from. Some details come from old traditions written down within a century of Francis's life; they are retold here simply and gently for young children.

1. **The Boy from Assisi.** Francis was born in Assisi around 1181. About 1205 he heard Christ speak from the crucifix at San Damiano (Thomas of Celano; Legend of the Three Companions). The original cross now hangs in the Basilica of St. Clare, Assisi.
2. **The Birds Who Listened.** Near Bevagna, about 1213 (Celano's First Life; *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, ch. 16). The scene was painted in the Upper Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi, around 1300.
3. **Brother Wolf of Gubbio.** *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, ch. 21. In the 1870s, workers restoring the little church of San Francesco della Pace in Gubbio reportedly found an old wolf's skeleton buried there.
4. **Francis's Animal Friends.** The rabbit, lambs, fish, worms, cicada, and bees come from Thomas of Celano's Lives of Francis; the falcon at La Verna from St. Bonaventure's Major Legend.
5. **The First Christmas Crib.** Greccio, Christmas 1223, with his friend John of Greccio (Celano's First Life).
6. **Brother Sun, Sister Moon.** The Canticle of the Creatures, written in 1225 near San Damiano — one of the first great poems in the Italian language. The song page is a simplified paraphrase.
7. **Good to know.** Francis died on October 3, 1226 and was declared a saint in 1228. He is patron of Italy and, since 1979, of ecology. The well-loved "Peace Prayer" ("Lord, make me an instrument of your peace") was written in the early 1900s, not by Francis himself.

Pictures (Wikimedia Commons): Giotto - Legend of St Francis - -15- - Sermon to the Birds.jpg — fresco in the Upper Basilica, Assisi, traditionally attributed to Giotto (Public domain); Giotto - Legend of St Francis - -13- - Institution of the Crib at Greccio.jpg — fresco in the Upper Basilica, Assisi, traditionally attributed to Giotto (Public domain); Gubbio panorama.jpg — Labicanense (CC BY 4.0); Assisi San Francesco BW 2.JPG — Berthold Werner (Public domain); San-Damiano-kors.jpg — Gunnar Bach Pedersen (Public domain). All other illustrations were made for this book.



St. Francis, friend of animals,
pray for us!

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