

St Francis of Assisi

As we approach the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, we are invited to reflect again on his message for us today in our complex and troubled world.

Epperly (2021) suggests that ...

Francis's message is even more important in light of this most recent pandemic. Francis – and his spiritual sister, Clare – remind us that we are all connected... The paths of greed, consumerism, individualism, and nationalism endanger the planet and its peoples. In the spirit of Francis, we need to break down barriers of friend and stranger, citizen and immigrant... like Francis and Clare we need to become earth-loving saints, committed to our planet and its peoples (Epperly. B.G. Walking with Francis of Assisi: from privilege to activism. 2021. Franciscan Media: Cincinnati. ix).

Francis and his companions practiced what they preached. They turned their back on wealth and power, choosing instead to embrace peace, community, outreach and gospel living at its most radical. When Pope Francis notes in his book: *The Church of Mercy: ... unless Christians are revolutionaries, they are not Christian* (13), he is describing the life, legacy and challenge of St Francis of Assisi.

Francis could have sought God through the more accepted monastic life of his day: ... *in a monastery, he would have elders who could answer his questions and guide him in sure ways. He would have the certainty of food on the table, a fine education, structure and order for his days, books for learning... But Francis was drawn elsewhere, to places undefined. Strangely he wanted a spiritual life that was unpredictable, without guarantees, without abbots, without securities. How unusual this was, and still is* (Sweeney, J.M. 2021. Feed the Wolf. Broadleaf Books: Canada. 21).

Francis chose a different way, albeit difficult, and his way gave birth to a Franciscan movement which has challenged and changed our world. That, indeed, is Francis' challenge to us today.

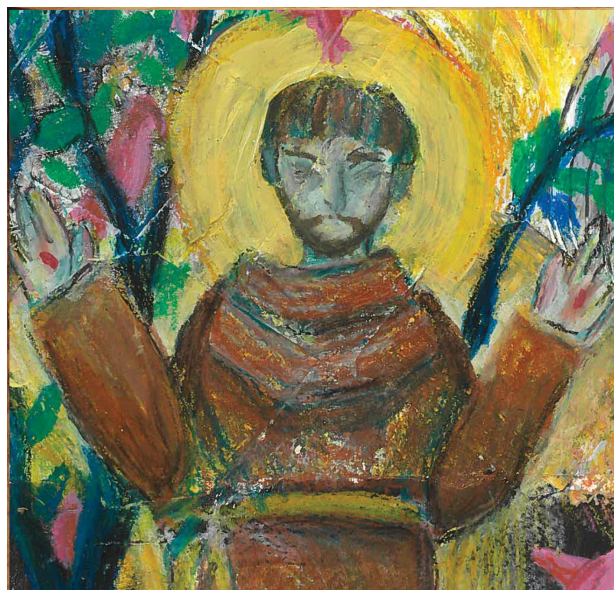
As Stetsos notes:

In the last ten years we have experienced rapid changes in our world, Church, society, politics, and cultural realities. But the human heart does not change in its fundamental longing for peace, kindness, justice, friendship, and heroes who inspire us to seek the good and to love and serve God in one another. St Francis and St Clare of Assisi have universally touched hearts by always breathing new life into these dreams in every age (2022. Franciscan Field Guide: Franciscan Places, Practices and Prayers. Franciscan Media: Cincinnati.2).

Epperly concurs inviting all of us to become...

saints and mystics for our time ... to confront the apparently insurmountable crises of the twenty-first century: global climate change and species destruction, massive starvation and poverty, political unrest and dishonesty, pluralism and the betrayal of the faith by religious leaders, the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor, the identification of materialistic success with self-worth ... (Walking with Francis of Assisi: from privilege to activism. 2021. Franciscan Media: Cincinnati. 14).

Let's start our journey to practical and responsive sainthood in our own place on this special day in our Church calendar.



Reflections: Who are the saints and mystics in our lives? How do our ministries address the crises of our time?

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.