

## Celebrating Francis of Assisi

As we celebrate the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology and animals, it is interesting to note that the science of ecology did not exist before the mid-twentieth century. St Francis therefore was revolutionary in his way of seeing the world and the interaction between all created beings. Indeed almost 800 years on he is still challenging us to look beyond ourselves to our connections to a bigger reality – creation as an outpouring of God's love.

In this Mercy Moment we look at some hallmarks of a Franciscan way of seeing the world which continue to challenge us as we walk in the way of mercy.

### SACREDNESS

St Francis urges us to see the face of Christ in every person and created thing – to show mercy, as he did, to everyone and everything we meet. Like Francis who greeted the lepers and speaks of receiving mercy from them, may we appreciate our encounters with others as sacraments.

### ECOLOGY

St Francis encourages us to regard all of creation as worthy of utmost respect and dignity. In this way we can walk with light footprints alert to the possibilities of action to protect and nurture the environment.

### POVERTY

St Francis rejected the trappings of wealth and privilege. He lived a simple life of community and sharing, challenging the accepted social norms of his day. May we too seek ways to live more simply, helping those who struggle and speaking out against consumerism and greed.

### ACCESSIBILITY

St Francis showed a rigid and hierarchical Church that there is another way – a personal understanding of divinity and spirituality, freeing ourselves from religiosity and control by encountering God in the everyday.

### RELATIONSHIP

St Francis built relationships. He attracted

hundreds of men and women (with St Clare) to a simpler life of service and reflection. He knew the power of companionship. May we too accompany and inspire others through a life of gospel service.

### DIALOGUE

Through his relationship with the Sultan of Egypt Malek al Kamil in 1219, St Francis demonstrated radical inclusion as a Franciscan tenet. It was a deliberate encounter which built relationship in a time of war and hostility. May we always practise openness to other ways and respect for the oneness of human experience.

### PRACTICALITY

St Francis spoke in the language of the people, he prayed from the heart and he avoided the compliance model in worship. His oft quoted observation that we should go out to preach the Gospel through our actions not our preaching is a challenge to all of us.

On this Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, we are invited to a simpler, more connected and empowering way of living God's mission in our world.



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### REFLECTION

What can you do to ensure you live a simpler, more connected and empowering life?

*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.*