

**Saint Francis of Assisi,**

Your example shows us how we should live in respectful solidarity with our sisters and brothers who lack the good things of the earth. Your actions are an example of how we should care for creation, how to be joyful and generous in our service of our loving God, and how to open our eyes to the presence of God in everyone.

Help us to be like you, sharing the joy and compassion of God with all whom we meet, and treating everyone and the whole of creation with reverence and respect.

**Amen.**

**A thought to take away**

Francis reminds us that we are all part of creation and we are all responsible for it – it belongs to those who will come after us, as much as it belongs to us. Like him, we live in a world where some are rich and many more are poor. Francis told his followers that they would spread the Gospel, not so much by their words, but by their actions. So...

**An action to complete**

- Log on to the Vatican website and find out what Pope Francis has to say about looking after the world, its people, its creatures and the environment. Share this in your form time, RE lesson or assembly.
- Find a way to spread the joy of the gospel today.

*Saint Francis of Assisi  
Pray for us*



**St Francis of Assisi**

**Feast Day**  
4 October

**Birthplace**  
Assisi, Italy

**Born**  
1182

**Died**  
3 October 1226

**Canonised**  
1228 by Pope Gregory IX

**Patron saint of**  
animals and ecology; full of love and respect for all of God's creation; founder of the Franciscan Order



*Let all things  
their Creator  
bless...*



"Let all things their Creator bless,  
And worship him in humbleness."

These words, adapted from St Francis' "Canticle of the Sun", show what he felt should be the attitude of all Christians: worship of the Creator, who gifts us with the earth and all its goodness; humble gratitude for all God's gifts; and showing respect for the Creator, through respect for every person and the whole of creation.

- How do I look after the gifts of creation which are for all?
- Do I give thanks to God, either privately or publicly, for my food before I start to eat, calling to mind those who have little food?

## The life of St Francis of Assisi

**F**rancis was born in Assisi, Italy, in 1182. His father was a wealthy merchant and Francis lived the life of a privileged young man about town. Francis set off to engage in one of the wars in Perugia. After spending a year in captivity, he returned home and contracted an illness which lasted some time. This resulted in the beginning of a spiritual dilemma for Francis.

As a young man, with a taste for the finer things of life, Francis had little experience of, or compassion for, those who were poor or sick, but whilst out riding one day, Francis came across a disfigured and poverty-stricken leper. He dismounted, gave his cloak to the leper, and kissed him. This marked the start of a radically new way of life for Francis.

**He began to see the world and its people in a different way, and spent much time in prayer.**

On one occasion, as he was praying in the dilapidated chapel of San Damiano, he heard a voice saying, "Francis, repair my church." Thinking this was a command to restore the chapel, Francis began rebuilding it with his own hands, using his father's goods and money to pay for the restoration. Pietro Bernadone had his son arrested. Francis admitted his 'crime', and returned the money and goods, which included stripping off the clothes he was wearing! He was hastily covered by the bishop in a simple peasant smock, and the transformation of "the poor man of Assisi" was complete.

Some time later, Francis realised the true meaning of the words he heard in San Damiano; he then understood that God was asking him to help restore the heart and spirit of his Church, recalling it to the spirit of the gospel; recognising the face of Christ in those living in poverty, living in a spirit of solidarity with them.

One of Francis' most well-known prayers is the "Canticle of the Sun", in which he praises God the Creator for the sun and moon, stars, fire and water – gifts of God, without which we cannot live.

**Francis truly understood the sacramental nature of all God's creation.**

This was revolutionary and Francis' way of life attracted many. It was also disturbing to many others, and he faced suffering, hardship and ridicule as he spread his message.

Francis' last years were a time of physical suffering, which he accepted as identifying him with the Christ who suffered, and when the end came, he welcomed "Sister Death", leading him to God. Francis died in 1226, and was laid to rest in the earth in his simple habit.

## CAFOD's work in Nicaragua

**St Francis took seriously the words of Genesis, requiring human beings to care for the earth and take responsibility for it. He also took seriously the dignity of every human being, created in God's image, loved by God and worthy of respect. These values guide and inspire Catholic Social Teaching and are the heart and spirit of CAFOD's work.**



Francis spoke of the beauty and gift of creation and the respect and reverence due to all creatures. We may note that our own Francis, our Pope, is calling us to the same kind of simplicity and faith and living of the Gospel, and respect for creation.

Mayling, 10, lives in Nicaragua. Although Nicaragua has an abundance of land and natural resources, its dependence on agriculture as the foundation of its economy makes it vulnerable to the impact of extreme weather conditions and unpredictable international food prices. CAFOD is working with partners in Nicaragua to bring about lasting changes in some of the poorest and most marginalised areas of the country.

Like St Francis, Mayling likes to take care of the environment. At school in Nicaragua she has learned not to contaminate the water or let animals drink from the water. "If you let dead animals in, then you will get ill," Mayling says. "If the animals drink contaminated water, they get sick. Sometimes, poor people fetch water from the river and get sick. Once, the well dried up; I had to drink water from the river and got sick."

**Mayling's mother, Marta, has been helped by a CAFOD-funded beekeeping project.**



This project aims to give the women in the area a way to make a living and provide a source of healthy nutrients. The honey provides a good burst of energy for someone who does not have enough food.

Mayling says, "Sometimes my grandmother gives us honey on a plate. I like it because it is sweet, and I like to eat it with coconut."

» Find out more by visiting [cafod.org.uk/secondary](https://cafod.org.uk/secondary) and searching for 'food'.