

SAINTS

When the Church *canonises* a person, that person is being recognised as a saint. It means that the person is a very good example of how to live a Christian life. It means that the person is with God in heaven

and, like all the friends of God, will pray for us still on our way to God. There are also many other saints that are known only to God. Let's look at a saint who is very well known: *St Francis of Assisi*.

St Francis of Assisi
1182-1226
Italy
Feast Day October 4th

Francis was born into a wealthy family in Assisi, a town in central Italy. His name comes from the fact that his mother, Pica, was a French lady. His father, Pietro, was a cloth merchant who had high hopes of Francis following him into the business. Francis spent much of his youth partying and playing at being a knight. He had a fine suit of armour, which he once gave to an old knight whose armour was shabby. At the age of twenty he went off to fight in a petty war with Perugia, a neighbouring city. Unfortunately he was captured by the Perugians and was made to spend a year in prison. Shortly after this he was seriously ill for quite some time.

These experiences changed Francis. He was no longer the carefree soul who loved parties and romantic adventures. He began to see that life was empty of any meaning. Other things began to happen. For example, he was riding in the country one day when he saw a leper. He came down off his horse, shared his cloak with the leper and kissed the poor man's diseased face. On another occasion, he was praying in a ruined country church, the chapel of St Damiano, when he heard a voice speak: "Francis, repair my church, which has fallen into disrepair, as you can see." At first, he took this to mean that the chapel needed fixing up. Only later did he realise that the voice was speaking about the spiritual state of the Church.

Meanwhile, Francis' father, Pietro, was worried about his son's new-found faith. Would he ever become a businessman? Things came to a head when Pietro found that Francis was selling his father's cloth to pay for church repairs. His father brought him to trial in front of the bishop. At the trial Francis did an extraordinary thing: he gave all his clothes back to his father. The embarrassed bishop quickly threw another cloak over Francis.

Francis had passed the point of no return. From now on, he was to be a poor man, working with his hands and begging for his needs ...

Research

St Francis of Assisi is loved by many people. Continue the story of his life. Mention:

- how the Franciscans were formed,
- Clare of Assisi,
- Francis' poems and songs,
- Francis' love of nature,
- the last days of Francis' life.

CANONISATION - when the Church declares a person to be a saint