

Meet Brother Juniper! • Saints for kids

LIVED: Brother Juniper lived in Italy and died on January 29, 1258.

MISSION: To serve God, his fellow brothers, and the poor humbly and joyfully.

ADVENTURES: St. Francis wanted to be a fool for God, but even he was no match for one of his earliest companions, Brother Juniper. For example, this humble brother, who was named for a type of tree, once cooked a month's worth of stew without shelling the eggs or plucking the chickens—all to save time cooking, so there would be more time for praying!

Not all of his antics were so funny, though. Once, Brother Juniper cut the foot off a pig in order to give it to a sick brother who had a taste for pig's feet. (Pig's feet was, and still is, considered a wonderful food by some people.) The brother was delighted by the dish, and laughed heartily at the funny story that Brother Juniper told about catching the pig.

Unfortunately, it wasn't long before the pig's owner showed up, red with rage and calling the brothers thieves. "What good is a three-footed pig?" he wanted to know.

The embarrassed Francis watched as the fuming farmer stomped away.

"Did you really cut the foot off that man's swine?" Francis asked Juniper.

"Yes, but it did our sick brother so much good!" Juniper answered. "Why all the fuss? The pig was God's first, and it provided the means for an act of love!"

Francis understood Juniper's point, but made him run after the

farmer and apologize anyway.

At first, when the man heard Brother Juniper telling him how glad he should be because his pig made someone else happy, he was even more furious.

Juniper thought the man hadn't understood him, so he told the story again, more slowly. "It was an act of love for someone who was sick! Isn't love more valuable than a pig? Why, you should donate the rest of the pig for the sake of love, too!" And he grabbed the startled man in a big bear hug.

The hug must have done it, because the farmer at last understood. He apologized for being so hot-tempered—and gave the brothers the whole pig.

Francis just shook his head in wonder and made a pun: "Would to God, my brothers, that I had a forest of such Junipers!"

M:C

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