

St. Francis of Assisi • Saint stories

Have you ever wished you could talk to the animals? It is believed that St. Francis could.

St. Francis was born while his father was away in France. His mother baptized him shortly after his birth, naming him after St. John the Baptist. When his father returned he was angry—naming his son after a saint!

“I want my son to be a wealthy cloth merchant like I am,” believed his father. So he renamed his son Francesco after the country of France which he loved.

Growing up young Francis had everything he could want, and as a teenager he led a sinful life. But he felt something was missing. St. Francis thought it was glory.

“If I just become famous, my life will be PERFECT!” So Francis decided to join a crusade (a war to save the Holy Land). He purchased a beautiful set of armor, a horse and everything else that was needed. He boasted he would return famous.

One day into the crusade, he had a dream. God wanted him to return home. St. Francis followed God’s will. This was not an easy thing to do because of all the boasting he had done before leaving.

“HA! HA! look at Francis. He sure became famous! Famous for only being in the army one day! HA! HA!” St. Francis heard this kind of teasing everywhere he went.

St. Francis began to pray. One day while he was out riding his horse, he spied a dirty leper who smelled badly. What would you do if you met someone who was very sick and smelled? Well, St. Francis got down off his horse and gave this man a kiss on

the hand. This surprisingly made St. Francis delightedly happy. As he rode off on his horse he glanced back. The man had disappeared!

"That must have been a test," thought Francis. "A year ago I would have turned my horse away from that man and ignored him."

St. Francis regularly went to a crumbling church to pray. One day, he heard Jesus talking to him from the crucifix.

"Repair my church," Jesus said. Believing he was to fix this old church, St. Francis gave a bunch of his family money for repairs. This made his father angry. "Give me back that money, Francis!" demanded his father. In response, Francis declared that he was no longer part of the family, and he didn't want any of his inheritance.

"I give back everything you have given me father, even the clothes on my body," said St. Francis.

St. Francis then led the life of a beggar and served God. Eventually he established an order of monks. There are stories about St. Francis being able to talk to the animals. One day there was a large flock of birds that St. Francis preached to, telling them they should be thankful. The birds stood still and listened as he walked among them. They only flew off when St. Francis told them to fly away.

Another story about St. Francis talking to an animal involved a wolf. This wolf had killed many people in a town due to hunger. The townspeople were going to hunt it down and kill the wolf. Instead, St. Francis went out and talked to the wolf, telling him to no longer kill anyone. The wolf obeyed and even became the town pet. The townspeople always fed the wolf from then on too.

Feast day: Oct. 4

St. Francis, pray for us!

Activity: What would you say?

Have a discussion with your child about St. Francis being able to talk to animals. Here are some questions to guide you:

Have you ever wanted to be able to talk to animals?

What animal would you want to talk to the most? Your pet?

What questions would you want to ask?

What do you think it might answer?

Afterwards, have your child:

Draw a picture of themselves and the animal talking.

Have him/her share the picture with another grown up describing the conversation the two would have. Then have your child ask the other person what animal they would like to talk with and what they would discuss.