

Week 2: St. Francis of Assisi/ Gloria

"God created us to praise, reverence, and serve God and in this way to save our souls.

God created all of the rest of creation to help us achieve the purpose for which God created us." – St. Ignatius

St. Francis of Assisi

- b. 1181-d.1226, St. Francis was the son of a wealthy silk merchant.
- Originally named Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone, his parents began calling him Francesco even when he was an infant.
- Francis was known to be gallant, witty, rambunctious, and jovial as a youth. Yet even then, he showed compassion for the poor. One day, as he sold his father's cloth in the market, a beggar asked him for alms. When he finished selling the silk, Francis ran to find the beggar and gave to him everything that he had earned that day in the marketplace. His friends mocked him and his father scolded him for this act of charity.
- In his early 20s Francis fought in the army, and for a period of time was captured. When reenlisting with the military he had a vision, which caused his return to Assisi. When his father asked if he now intended to marry, he replied, "Yes, a fairer bride than any of you have ever seen," meaning "Lady Poverty". He then was told in a vision to rebuild God's church, a command which he took literally and he began fixing old, rundown churches and chapels, most famously the "Portiuncula". His first instinct was to give his family's money to the church in order to help with the rebuilding, though this enraged his father who brought the grievance to the bishop. Francis publicly stripped, saying that his real father was in heaven.
- Francis is known for his ministry to the lepers. He recognized that everything God created was loved by God, and as repulsive as lepers were to Francis, he understood that God was calling him to deeper love for lepers, and anything else that he had previously closed his heart to.
- Francis' conversion inspired many to follow his example. Within a year, eleven men had given all that they had to the poor and joined Francis in his complete devotion "to follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in his footsteps" (Francis' first, simple "rule of life"). This was the First Order. St. Clare asked to join, and Francis helped her found the Second Order, the Poor Clares. Eventually, others came wanting to follow him, but they had other obligations, such as a spouse or a family, which prevented them from leaving everything. He accepted them as Third Order Franciscans, people who led ordinary lives, but who strove to live in the same manner as the other brothers and sisters.
- Francis was constantly asking two questions: Who are you, God? Who am I? As he lived the prayer of these questions, he plunged ever more deeply into Love for all of humankind and creation.
- Stories of Francis' love and respect for creation permeate our image of him. It is said that Francis claimed, "The world is my cloister". Often Francis is depicted surrounded by birds and animals. One of the most well-known stories of Francis recalls a time when Francis passes a flock of birds and told his brothers to wait while he preached to the birds. They all stayed to listen.
- Another story tells of a wolf who terrorized the people of Gubbio, a town nearby Assisi. Francis found the wolf. He had a conversation with the wolf, understanding that the wolf had acted poorly only because of his hunger. He then accompanied the wolf into the town and made a pact between the wolf and the citizens. The wolf would not terrorize the townspeople or eat their sheep if the people would



put some food out for the wolf to eat every day. Even the dogs of the town were instructed to respect the wolf. They all lived in harmony from that day forward.

- Two years before his death, Francis received the stigmata while he prayed at Mount La Verna. The whole account was recorded by his companion, Brother Leo. This is the first recorded instance of the stigmata.
- Francis died in 1226 while listening to Psalm 142. "I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. I pour out before him my complaint; before him I tell my trouble. When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who watch over my way. In the path where I walk people have hidden a snare for me. Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. I cry to you, LORD; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.' Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me." Two years after his death he became a saint, and immediately after that the Basilica of St. Francis began construction in Assisi.
- Francis did not write down many of his teachings, but perhaps one of his most famous writings is the "Canticle of the Sun" from which many hymns have been composed. Follow this link to experience Francis' "Canticle of the Sun" with and through art and music.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=canticle+of+the+sun+st+francis&&view=detail&mid=A5C240D1ECE604557024A5C240D1ECE604557024&&FORM=VRDGAR>

Reflective Questions:

As you consider creation and the world around you, do you sense any new gratitude arising in you? Is there anything in God's creation that you view as distasteful? What might it look like for that which seems distasteful to you to be robed in love?

As you consider the story of Francis and the wolf of Gubbio, what wrongs might you have done out of "hunger"? What were you "hungry" for? Consider a time when you may have felt wronged by someone else. Might "hunger" have been a participant in that situation as well? Notice any prayers that may arise in you.

When you consider the Gloria, why is it important to include the Gloria after the Kyrie? Why might it be important to include grateful expressions at the beginning of mass?

When you consider Ignatius' statement at the top of the page, how might gratefulness lead to reverence in your life? How might reverence lead to service in your life? Are there any ways you feel God is calling you into service for any part of His creation? What is your sense of how God, through creation, might be supporting your desires for service?

1. Glory to God in the highest, [*Hymnus Angelicus*]
and **on earth peace to people of good will.**

2. **We praise you,** [Acclamations]
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,

3. **Lord God, Heavenly King,** [Invocations]
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, **Only Begotten Son,**
Lord God, Lamb of God, **Son of the Father,**

4. You take away the sins of the world, [Petitions]
have mercy on us;
You take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
You are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

5. For you alone are the Holy One; [Doxology]
you alone are the Lord.
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God, the Father.
Amen

Also known as the Greater Doxology (as opposed to the Lesser Doxology, the *Gloria Patri*), the Gloria is one of the longest text in the Mass, second only to the Credo, and can be broken into six, distinct sections. Dating back to a “morning prayer” in the Apostolic Constitution (c. 380), and to a Greek version in the second century, the first Latin version appears in the 6th Century (the *Bangor Antiphonary*, c. 690) but is different from today’s version which is first found in Frankish sources from the 9th Century. Found regularly in the Roman rite by the 6th Century, it was generally reserved for special occasions

Reflection questions:

- What is the significance of the Gloria’s placement within the Mass? How might its appearance just after the Kyrie add to the flow and structure of worship?
- Not sung at funerals, during Lent, or during Sundays in Advent, the Gloria, along with the Te Deum, is sung on all festal occasions. What effect might the withholding of the Gloria at certain times throughout the year have on our liturgical seasons?
- What do you see in the structure of the Gloria’s five sections? How do they relate? How are they different from each other?
- How might the structure of the Gloria be a model for your prayer?