

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Francis of Assisi**  
**Lesson Plans for Older and Younger Children**  
**Feast Day, October 4**

**Francis of Assisi**  
**1182-1286**

The saints are “the lights of the world in every generation,” people whose lives and deeds have shone brightly and helped others more closely follow God. There are saints who lived long ago and there are saints living and working in the world today, saints who are known by the church and saints who are known only to God. We say that the church—we—are part of the Communion of Saints, the company of all faithful people, connected through our baptism to those Christians who have died, those who are alive now, and those who haven’t yet been born. The word “saint” means holy.

In the Episcopal Church we have a Calendar of Saints, holy men and women we remember in prayer and with readings from the Bible on their feast day.

**Supplies needed:** white cloth for prayer table, a candle. For older children: a Bible, The Hymnal 1982, drawing materials. For younger children: Cheerios and pipe cleaners

**Prepare:** Prepare your prayer/gathering space with a small table, or space with a piece of cloth. On this cloth place a white candle. If you like, you might place a small statue of St. Francis or a printed image of him on the table. Other appropriate items would be a flower in a vase or leaves and acorns.

**Welcoming the children:** Gather the children around the prayer space and ask some wondering questions: I wonder what kind of person is called a saint? I wonder what the work of a saint might be? (You may wish to share the introduction above.) Today we will hear the story of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Light the candle.

**Opening prayer:** Jesus, your saints are the lights of the world in every generation. Help us to shine as they do, letting your light glow in us that through us others might see you. Amen.

**Tell the story:**

Francis of Assisi was born in Italy in the twelfth century (about 800 years ago) to a wealthy family. He loved parties and fine things like the beautiful brocade and silk fabrics his father bought and sold, and he dreamed of adventure. He became a knight and went off to fight, but he was captured and put in prison. After a year, his father paid a ransom (a large sum of money) and he was freed. Francis knew then that he would not become a cloth merchant like his father. He found himself in a church that was falling down, and as he prayed, Francis heard God tell him to rebuild it. He sold a bale of his father’s silk to pay for the repairs, which made his father very angry. The bishop told Francis that God would give him what he needed, so Francis gave his

father his purse of gold coins—and all the fine clothes Francis was wearing! From that time on, Francis wore only rough burlap and gave up all his belongings to live among and serve the poor and the sick. Francis followed Jesus in his actions, not just his words, and soon he had followers of his own who wanted to live simply and serve God and others as he did. He took special notice and care of God’s creation. He helped people and animals live together peacefully. One of the stories told about him is that he helped a village make friends with a wolf that had been attacking their animals. Even the birds flocked around him as he told them of God’s love. Some churches hold a blessing of the animals on his feast day and people bring their pets to church. Francis may even have staged the first Christmas pageant, with real animals to warm the Christ child in the stable. Francis died in the same little church that he rebuilt with his own hands. He still inspires others with his generosity, his joy in God’s creation, and his simple, peaceful ways.

**Reflection Questions:**

- I wonder what part of Francis’s story you like best?
- I wonder what part of Francis’s story you think is the most important?
- I wonder what part of Francis’s story is also about you?

You may move to another space with tables for the activity time.

**Activity for Older Children:** One of the readings appointed for Francis of Assisi, who so loved God’s creation, is Psalm 148, verses 7-14. Have the children read it aloud:

Praise the Lord from the earth,  
you sea monsters and all deeps,  
8 fire and hail, snow and frost,  
stormy wind fulfilling his command!

9 Mountains and all hills,  
fruit trees and all cedars!  
10 Wild animals and all cattle,  
creeping things and flying birds!

11 Kings of the earth and all peoples,  
princes and all rulers of the earth!  
12 Young men and women alike,  
old and young together!

13 Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
his glory is above earth and heaven.  
14 He has raised up a horn for his people,  
praise for all his faithful,  
for the people of Israel who are close to him.  
Praise the Lord!

Invite them to illustrate the psalm as a mural or in pictures that can be joined together in a hallway or bulletin board. You may want to share with them Francis's own "Canticle of the Sun," a version of which appears in the Hymnal 1982 as "All Creatures of Our God and King" (400). Talk together about how we take care of God's creation and each other.

**Activity for Younger Children:** Francis loved everything God created, and even the birds flocked to him to hear his words of God's love. Invite the children to string Cheerios onto pipe cleaners that can be linked in circles or other shapes and hung on tree branches to feed the birds. Talk together about ways we can take care of each other and take care of the animals and the earth.

**Gather/Ending:** Return to your prayer space and gather in a circle to pray.

**Prayer for St. Francis:**

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord, grant your people grace gladly to renounce the vanities of this world; that, following the way of blessed Francis, we may for love of you delight in your whole creation with perfect joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Prayer for younger children** (Use the prayer below by having the children repeat each phrase):

Dear God, (Dear God),  
may we with your help (may we with your help)  
follow Francis (follow Francis),  
living simply, (living simply),  
sharing generously, (sharing generously),  
loving and caring for all your creation, (loving and caring for all your creation),  
through Jesus our Lord.(through Jesus our Lord).  
Amen. (Amen).

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*Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.*

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