Francis and the Whole Wide World

Ages 4 to 9 · About 10 minutes to read aloud · Feast day October 4

Virtue: Loving all of God's creation

The story in a nutshell

Francis grows up rich in Assisi and dreams of being a knight, but after war and illness he finds real joy in giving everything away. He calls the sun his brother, speaks to the birds, sets up the first nativity scene, and shows us how to love God's whole wide world.

Before reading

- Look at the cover. What do you see around Francis?
- What is your favorite animal? Who made it? *Listen for: God made every creature.*

While reading

- When Francis hugs the sick man: why did everyone else hurry away? How do you think the man felt? *Listen for: People were afraid; the man felt loved.*
- When Francis talks to the birds: what did he say God had given them? *Listen for: Wings to fly and a song to sing.*
- At Greccio: what did Francis make for Christmas? Do you have one at home? *Listen for: The first nativity scene.*

After reading

- Francis gave away his fine clothes, yet he sang all day. What made him so happy? *Listen for: Loving God and others, not having things.*
- Francis called the sun his brother and the moon his sister. What else could we call brother or sister? *Listen for: Brother Wind, Sister Water, a pet, a tree.*
- How can we take care of God's world this week? *Listen for: Be gentle with animals, don't waste, pick up litter.*
- *Older children:* Francis was frightened of the sick man, but he went to him anyway. When is it hard to be kind?

Words to explain

- **Assisi**: the hilltop town in Italy where Francis lived
- **knight**: a soldier who rode a horse and wore armor
- **nativity scene**: a model of the stable where Jesus was born, with Mary, Joseph and the animals
- **Franciscans**: the people who followed Francis's way of life, and still do
- **patron saint**: a saint who prays for a group; Francis is the patron of animals and caring for the earth

Be a Little Saint this week

The book ends with three challenges. Choose one to try together, or send all three home:

1. Be gentle and kind to an animal today, just as Francis was.
2. Give one of your toys or treats to someone who would love it.
3. Go outside and say thank you to God for three things you can see.

Pray together

Dear God, thank you for the sun and the rain, for animals and people, and for everything you made. Help me to love your whole wide world the way Saint Francis did. Amen.

A note for the leader

The sick man. The book doesn't name his illness. In Francis's time it was leprosy, a disease that made people afraid to come near. You can tell older children; the heart of it is that Francis came close when everyone else stayed away.

Go further

Our free **Saint Francis activity pack** has a Song of Creation coloring page and a ready-made letter to families for a class animal-shelter collection. More ideas for the feast day are at littlesaintsbighearts.com/saint-francis-feast-day, and every free printable is at littlesaintsbighearts.com/printables.

Francis and the Whole Wide World by Joseph Glazier. Free to copy for your class or program.