



Sunday 4 October 2020

Francis was born in Assisi in central Italy either in 1181 or the following year. He was baptised Giovanni but his father called him 'Francesco', perhaps because he traded in France and had married a French wife.

Francis' father wanted his son to take over the family business

but he was rebellious and had a difficult relationship with his father. Francis felt shame at being captured then imprisoned during a brief war with the local city of Perugia and returned a changed man.

He took to caring for disused churches and for the poor, particularly those suffering from leprosy. While praying in the semi-derelict church of St Damian, he distinctly heard the words, 'Go and repair my church, which you see is falling down.'

Others joined him and he prepared a simple, gospel-based Rule for them all to live by. As the Order grew, it witnessed to Christ through preaching the gospel of repentance, emphasising the poverty of Christ as an example for his followers. Two years before his death, his life being so closely linked with that of his crucified Saviour, he received the Stigmata, the marks of the wounds of Christ, on his body.

His Order had spread throughout western Christendom by the time of his death on this day, 1226,

Image: the only near-contemporary image of St Francis

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 All creatures of our God and King ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,

**You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for St Francis of Assisi

O God, you ever delight to reveal yourself
to the child-like and lowly of heart:
grant that, following the example of the blessed Francis,
we may count the wisdom of this world as foolishness
and know only Jesus Christ and him crucified,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the book of the Prophet Micah

'With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:6-8

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Galatians

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen. *Galatians 6:14–18*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 For the beauty of the earth

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' *Luke 12:22–34*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

It was a dark and stormy night. A lone traveller across the moor was fighting against a strong, biting wind. Suddenly he saw a light on the horizon. He made for it and was soon welcomed by the abbot of small monastery. After a good dinner, they settled down to a bit of recreation. It was odd. A monk stood and shouted out, 'Number 1!' and everyone roared with laughter. Another stood up, and said, 'Number 12!' and again the monks rocked with mirth.

'What's going on?' asked the man. 'Ah', said the abbot, 'You see, we have been together so long that now we all know our stories so well that we no longer need to repeat the whole thing. In fact, we just need to say the number of the story, remember it, and enjoy it.'

'Can I try one?' asked the man. On being given permission, he shouted out, 'Number 3!' Immediately, there was a stony silence.

'What went wrong?' asked the man. 'Ah', said the abbot, 'You know how it is: some people simply can't tell a story.'

I wonder how good you are at telling the Christian story? All of us are called to speak the Good News of Jesus, the news of His resurrection, of God and His love, of the wonderful things that happen when the Holy Spirit of God enters a soul and takes over. Sometimes, we say the story in such a way that everyone around us groans. Others say the story in such a way that it sounds boring, or moralistic. We may even tell it in such a way that the goodness of God becomes a chilling, vile thing.

Well, today in the Church calendar we celebrate St Francis of Assisi. Using his story, we'll explore ways of telling The Story that make the God more interesting.

St Francis was born in what is now Italy, into a rich family. When he was a young man, while exploring the countryside, he found a deserted church, San Damiano. he entered it and saw a painted crucifix above the altar. As he approached it, he was convinced that it was speaking to him. 'Mend my church' the voice seemed to say. At first, Francis thought he had to mend the fabric of the small chapel. He poured his money into the project. But he soon realised that God was not talking about bricks and mortar but the work of the church which, in that day, had become exceptionally dull and lacklustre. How like today: we too often think of 'the church' as a building, and when we talk about it, we are actually saying something about the building. All too often, when we invite people to our church, we want them to

see its interior, or even 'meet my friends there' when we should be thinking about the work of the Kingdom of God. God prefers to show Himself in Kingdom work.

The **second** story I like about St Francis concerns a beggar covered with festering sores. Francis saw the man and was inwardly repelled. But he was somehow enabled to see the man as God saw him. This time, he was overcome with compassion and rushed into the street, flung his arms around the man, and kissed him. He was showing the love of God. All too often, we prefer to look at people with physical eyes: we see the sores or the rags, the shifty eyes and the ability (or, more likely, the *inability*) to be like us. Then we judge. If we really want people to see God, we must learn to first see them as God would see them. Then and only then will they see God; and they see God in our reaction to them. This action is extremely visible.

And the **third** story starts with a well-known image: Francis preaching to the birds. The image of St Francis as a lover of nature and wildlife was built on this simple, romantic image. He did genuinely love wildlife and he did truly love nature, but this story has been inverted. Francis was could not stop speaking of God. But one particular day Francis had been in a town preaching about God and been turned away repeatedly. He went into the wilderness near Assisi because he was incapable of stopping; and he spoke to the birds. It's not an image of *naiveté* but a man spitting with anger at the cold-heartedness he encountered and utterly unwilling to stop speaking about God. Most of us would have given up long ago. In fact many of us *have* given up. God wants us to speak of His love and to love with the love we speak about. Telling God's story requires us to love because He is love.

It was a dark and stormy night. For the second time in a week, a lone traveller came across the moor, fighting against a strong, biting wind. Suddenly he saw a light on the horizon, remembered it was a monastery, and made for it. After dinner, the monks again settled down to their usual recreation. The first stood and shouted, 'Number 6!' and everyone roared with laughter.

The man asked if he could have a go. He stood and shouted, 'Number two!' There was a moment of silence—incredulity almost—then laughter that went on and on. The man finally turned to the abbot. 'That was a little OTT' he said 'What's up?'

'Well' said the abbot, 'We thought we knew that one, but the way you said it, we realised we didn't ... *and it was good!*'

Many, many of the people we meet think they know what Christianity is about. They think it is dull or irrelevant. Or maybe they *don't* think about Christianity because it never occurs to them. It is our job to say the old, old story in such a way that it is new. Not only new, but relevant, interesting and of vital interest to them.

To that end, we need to stop talking about the church as though it was merely a building. Invite people to meet with God. We must give people the welcome that comes from learning to see them as God sees them, with genuine love and warmth. So we must continue to tell people—anyone and everyone—about the love of God.

How do *you* tell the Christian story?

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

O God, whose name is Love, you created this world and all that is in it. We ask you to look with compassion and mercy upon us all. Look upon your wild creatures, O God, which delight us by their variety and beauty. Be with us in our struggle for existence; and shelter them from the natural and human dangers that surround them.
Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

Look upon our companion animals that share our homes and our lives, and which show us a love and loyalty few people can surpass. Bless them for the pleasure and companionship they give and protect all those who suffer cruelty and neglect.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

Look, especially, O God, upon all those your creatures who suffer at the hands of humans in laboratories, factory farms, slaughterhouses, traps, sport, and entertainment. Be with them in their fear, pain and suffering, and hold them in your loving hands.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

Look upon men and women, O God, your creation with love and mercy. Forgive us our selfishness and cruelty and lead us gently back into your way of love. Transform our hearts until they truly reflect the way shown to us by your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, whose love was perfect and who loved to the end that he gave his own life for us.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

Forgive us our bitterness against those who abuse your creation, for Christ taught us to forgive, even as he forgave. Yet change the hearts of all who use animals with cruelty so that they may be filled with your love and mercy. Inspire all governments, and those in authority, to change the direction of medical research and food production, and to bring an end by law to all animal abuse.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer.

Guide us all by your Holy Spirit into his transforming way of truth and love, and nurture in us a Christ-like spirit of compassion which is boundless and perfect. O God, we await the coming of your Kingdom, in our hearts and in your world.

All Amen

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The peace

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 As the deer pants

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

Christ the Son of God, born of Mary,
fill you with his grace to trust his promises and obey his will;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 All creation worships you (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

And now we give you thanks,
because you have raised up our father Francis
to burn as a shining light in your church,
that, inflamed with love for you
and the whole of your creation,
and bearing in his body the marks of your Son's passion,
he might bring to glory many sons and daughters.
Therefore, And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you
and, in joyful gladness, we unite our voices with theirs
and sing the ageless hymn of your praise:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Francis and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Lord God,
you made your church rich
through the poverty of blessed Francis:
help us like him not to trust in earthly things
but to seek your heavenly gifts;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.