

SAINTS ALIVE! OCTOBER 4: ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, PATRON SAINT OF ECOLOGY



Canticle of the Sun

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and all creation is shouting for joy. Come dance in the forest, come play in the field, and sing, sing to the glory of our God!

Praise for the sun, the bringer of day, he carries the light of our God in his rays; the moon and the stars who light up the way unto our God!

Praise for the wind that blows through the trees, the seas' might storms, the gentlest breeze; they blow where they will, they blow where they please to please our God!

Praise for the rain that waters our fields, and blesses our crops so all the earth yields; from death unto life her mystery revealed springs forth in joy.

Praise for the fire who gives us her light, the warmth of the sun to brighten our night; she dances with joy, her spirit so bright, she sings of You.

Praise for the earth who makes life to grow, the creatures you made to let your life show; the flowers and trees that help us to know the heart of love.

The Story of St. Francis

The Canticle of the Sun has its roots in a religious song written by St. Francis of Assisi, thanking God for all of creation. Pope John Paul II declared St. Francis to be the patron saint of ecology.

Francis did not start his life with reverence for God's creation. He was born into a wealthy family; his father was a silk merchant. Indulged by his family, Francis loved fine clothes and spending money with his friends.

Through the grace of God, Francis began to reflect on his ways at the age of 25 and sought prayer and solitude. He shed his fancy clothes and extravagant ways. One day Francis came upon a leper. He was filled with disgust at the appearance of the leper and he began to retreat. But gaining control of himself he dismounted from his horse and embraced the leper and kissed him, as a fellow child of God.

Francis's sense of fraternity included all of God's creation. Francis felt that nature, all God's creations, were part of his brotherhood. He found in all created things, however trivial, some reflection of Divine perfection. Francis thought that if everything came from one Father then all are real kin.

For Francis, the personification of the elements in the "Canticle of the Sun" is more than a literary poetry. Francis's love of creatures arose from a deep and abiding sense of the presence of God in all creation.

Today's society would do well to recognize the presence of God in all creation.

- Instead of viewing the Columbia River Gorge as merely the means with which to transport oil and coal, we look upon it with awe: "The Columbia River and its tributaries are intended by God to be living water: bountiful and healthy providers for the common good. The water itself is to be a clear sign of the Creator's presence." *The Columbia River Watershed International Pastoral Letter*
- Instead of justifying relaxed regulations on power plants as incentive to create jobs, we adopt the U.S. Bishops' approach and "welcome the setting of standards to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants and thereby mitigate climate change."
- Instead of denying man's role in creating climate change, we can heed the Vatican's words: "Climate Change is man-made and man's responsibility."

St. Francis, pray for us. And pray for all creation.



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