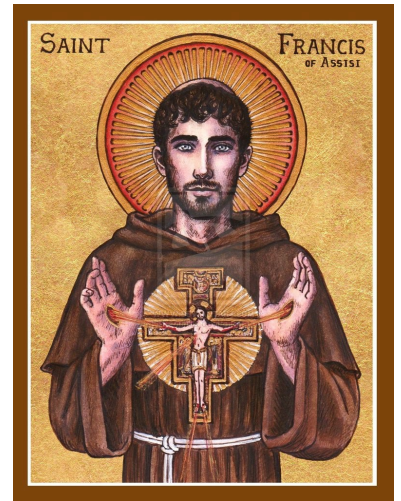


Saint Francis of Assisi



Born in Italy around 1181, St. Francis of Assisi was brought up in a wealthy family. Stories say that he spent his youth drinking, partying and spending lots of money. After fighting in a battle, Francis was captured and put in prison.

He spent nearly a year in prison, waiting for the money his father would send for ransom. During his time in jail he began getting visions from God.

After his release from prison, he told others that he had heard the voice of Christ. Christ had told him to repair the Christian Church and live a life of poverty. Thousands of followers were drawn to him, listening to his sermons and joining his way of life. These followers became known as Franciscan friars.

Francis would travel between five villages per day, transforming the church. He even went so far as to preach to animals, which garnered criticism and earned him the nickname "God's fool." But Francis's message was spread far and wide, and thousands of people were captivated by what they heard.

In 1224, Francis reportedly received a vision that left him with the stigmata of Christ—marks resembling the wounds Jesus Christ suffered when he was crucified, through his hands, and the gaping lance wound in his side—making Francis the first person to receive the holy wounds of the stigmata. Francis's wounds never left him for the rest of his life. St Francis is the patron saint of animals and the environment. We celebrate his feast day on October 4th.