



THE CORD

A Newsletter From St. Anthony's Guild

Dear Follower of St. Anthony,

2020 has definitely been a challenging year for all of us. However, despite many things continuing to remain closed and advice to limit social gatherings, we are continuing to find new and creative ways to celebrate holidays and special observances with you.

We are streaming many of our services for you to watch online and will continue to do so for the time being for the safety of everyone. On September 25th, the Franciscan Friars will celebrate the Great Novena of St. Francis and on October 4th, we will celebrate the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

While you may not be able to attend any live feasts in your area, we hope you will come and join us for mass online to honor this patron saint of animals who continues to remain popular across many different faiths.

I will continue praying for all of my St. Anthony's Guild members and wish you all a safe and joyous feast day wherever you may be.

Be well,

Fr. David Convertino, OFM

Executive Director of St. Anthony's Guild

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St. Francis and The Animals

Animals, like people, have their own unique personalities and traits and often respond well to people who are around them. In the lives of Saints, animal responsiveness has been brought to higher levels in the presence of holy people. The stories of St. Francis and the animals are some beloved examples of this. He is often depicted in pictures with different animals such as birds to whom he preached, a rabbit who wouldn't leave him when he saved him from a trap, and a wolf who stopped terrorizing an Italian town at the Saints request. It is not surprising that St. Francis is known as the patron saint of animals, birds, and the environment. Here are some stories behind a few of the animals St. Francis encountered.

The Birds: It is said that St. Francis and his companions made a trip through the Spoleto Valley in Italy near the town of Bevagna. Suddenly, St. Francis spotted a variety of birds. He left his companions and ran towards the birds, who waited for him even though he expected them to fly off. When he spoke, they didn't move.

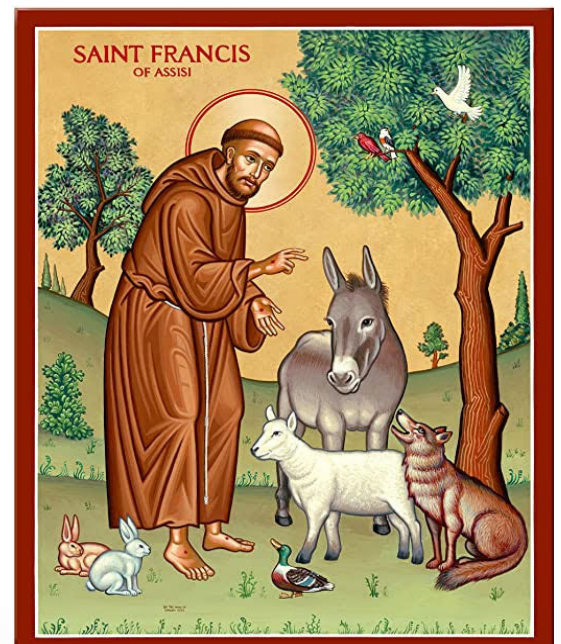
St. Francis asked the birds to listen to the Word of God and told them to praise their Creator because he gave them all they needed including wings to fly, a home in the air and Gods guidance and protection. The birds then gazed at the Saint rejoicing and praising God in a wonderful way according to their nature. St. Francis gave them his blessing and made the sign of the cross over them. The birds then flew off and St. Francis rejoiced, thanked God and went on his way.

From that day on, he made it his habit to invoke all birds, animals and reptiles to praise and love their Creator. There were many other remarkable events of St. Francis speaking to the animals including a time when he quieted a flock of noisy birds that were interrupting a religious ceremony. The birds settled down and waited until the sermon was finished.

The Rabbit: One day a fellow Friar brought a rabbit who had been caught in a trap to St. Francis. He told the rabbit to be more aware of its surroundings in the future, then released the rabbit from the trap and set it on the ground to go on its own way. The rabbit hopped right back up onto St. Francis' lap, to be close to him.

St. Francis then took the rabbit a few steps into the woods and set it down. Once again, the rabbit followed St. Francis back to his seat and hopped on his lap. Finally, he asked one of his fellow Friars to take the rabbit far into the woods and let it go.

The Wolf: In the town of Gubbio in Italy where St. Francis once stayed, he learned of a wolf that was terrorizing the town by killing and eating not only animals, but people as well. The villagers were so afraid of the wolf that they became afraid to leave the city walls. St. Francis took pity on the people and decided to go out and meet the wolf. He was warned by the people, but he told them that God would take care of him. Several peasants and one brave Friar offered to accompany St. Francis outside the city walls. Once outside the city walls, the peasants became too scared and would not go any farther. St. Francis and his Friar companion continued on. Suddenly, the wolf appeared and jumped out of



the woods with its jaws open ready to kill. St. Francis made the Sign of the Cross toward it. The power of God caused the wolf to slow down and to close its mouth.

St. Francis then called out to the wolf ordering it in the name of Christ not to hurt anyone. The wolf lowered its head and lay down at St. Francis' feet. He explained to the wolf that he had been terrorizing people, killing not only animals, but humans who are made in the image of God. He told the wolf that he will help him make peace with the villagers and that they will not harm him, and he will no longer harm them. The wolf nodded his head that he understood. St. Francis asked the wolf to make a pledge and as he extended his hand to receive the pledge, the wolf extended his front paw into the Saints hand. St. Francis ordered the wolf to follow him into town to make peace with the villagers.

In the town square with the wolf at his side, St. Francis gave the villagers a sermon on the wondrous and fearful love of God, calling them to repent from all their sins. He then offered the villagers peace, on behalf of the wolf. The villagers then promised to feed the wolf. St. Francis asked the wolf if he would live in peace with the villagers under those terms and the wolf bowed his head and twisted his body in a way that convinced everyone he accepted the pact. The wolf once again placed his paw in St. Francis' hand as a sign of the pact.

From that day on the village people kept the pact they had made. The wolf lived for two years among the villagers, going from door to door for food. He hurt no one and no one hurt him. When the wolf finally died of old age, the people of Gubbio were very sad. The wolf's peaceful ways had been a living reminder to them of the wonders, patience, virtues and holiness of St. Francis.

The Donkey: It is said that on his deathbed, St. Francis thanked his donkey for carrying and assisting him throughout his life, and his donkey wept.



Happenings around St. Anthony's Guild

During the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic, our Friars continue to pray for all the health care providers, first responders, service personnel, grocery store workers and everyone who is caring for us and keeping us safe. We happily, received a government exemption from the Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, to reopen our office and allow only two employees to come into work. This exemption was granted to St. Anthony's Guild office because of our financial support for our work with the poor and elderly.

We appreciate your patience as we continue to work as fast as possible to get our "THANK YOU" to you very soon. God Bless You, and remember we are praying for you! And speaking of Prayers, you now have a direct Prayer Line To St. Anthony.

In these uncertain times, we invite you to place a toll-free call to the Friars and ask them to pray to St. Anthony for your special intentions. Simply dial this toll-free number **1-888-407-5112** and after the message let the Franciscan Friars know what your prayer need is, and we will pray for you and your intentions. There is no cost, only that we ask you to also pray for us.



In Transitus



Please remember our recently deceased Friars in your prayers. Please continue to pray for them as they have done for all of you, each and every day.

Christopher Posch, OFM, 58, a professed Franciscan friar for 30 years and a priest for 25, died on July 5th at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring, MD where he had been hospitalized since early June with pneumonia. He had served since 2016 as pastor of St. Camillus Parish, where funeral services will be held.

Fr. Chris had served since 2002 as a site supervisor for the Province's Franciscan Volunteer Ministry through which young adults serve the marginalized with Franciscan communities. During his Franciscan life, Fr. Chris participated in many advocacy events to help the poor and marginalized. He could often be seen at demonstrations in the Washington, D.C., area advocating for immigrant rights.

He is survived by his father Anthony Posch of New Orleans, a brother Michael of Southaven, New York, and two sisters – Elizabeth Kohl of Centerport, New York, and Kathy Posch of New York City.

