

St. Francis of Assisi  
Feast Day: October 4

St. Francis was born in Assisi, Italy, to the wealthy Bernardone family. His father was a well-renowned merchant who hoped that one day his son could grow up to be a popular, rich, and heroic merchant like himself. As Francis grew up, he enjoyed a life of comfort and pleasure. Having fun and being successful were the most important things to him, and he was able to do whatever he liked. However, he would spend most of his time getting into trouble and living a sinful life. His father was very pleased with him and thought to himself, "My son is popular, handsome, and well-liked. He would make a fine knight. Then he shall become even more famous and powerful." His father bought Francis a shiny set of armor and a fine horse on which to ride. Francis soon set out for a crusade, a war to defend the Holy Land, and everyone was convinced he would return a famous hero.

One night on his way to the crusade, Francis had a dream in which God told him to return to his family. Francis was puzzled by this dream. What would people say if he returned home without winning any battles or saving anybody? A few days later, while riding on his horse, he noticed a leper, a person with a very serious skin disease, on the side of the road. Francis was inspired to get off of his horse and kiss the man's hand. Suddenly, a great sense of peace and joy overtook Francis and he knew that God was not calling him to a life of fame and comfort, but to a life of humble service.

Francis began to pray more and more everyday and grew closer to God. One day, he heard Jesus tell him to repair His Church. Francis thought that Jesus wanted him to literally repair the stone church in the town. He therefore sold some of his father's belongings for money to fix the church. His Father was furious when he saw Francis returning without fame or power. Francis explained that he did not need all of those things but rather desired to live a life of service. He wanted to serve Christ by serving others. That is exactly what Francis continued to do for the rest of his life.

