

Francis was born of a wealthy family. At the age of 20, he left his family and gave up his wealth for a life of poverty serving God. During his lifetime, he began the Franciscan Order.



This picture depicts St. Francis embracing a leper.

FRANCIS LIVED THE WORDS OF JESUS:
"If any one wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
Matthew 16.24

MEMORIZE!

Francis of Assisi was also very fond of nature. Wild animals were tamed in his presence. He is often pictured and



Francis was known as "The Little Poor Man of Assisi." When he began to avoid sports and feasts, his friends asked him laughingly if he was thinking of marrying. He answered, "Yes, a fairer bride than any of you have ever seen!" He was talking about "Lady Poverty", as he called his new life. Francis trusted in God's care, rather than material things. The brothers of his order worked or begged for what they needed to live, and any extra was given to the poor.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CRIB

Three years before Francis died, he was taken up with the idea of celebrating the birth of Jesus by re-enacting the scene in a stable, complete with a manger, people, and live animals. This had never been done before. Francis threw himself into the event with great passion, trying to express his great love for his Savior. He wanted people to remember how the birth of Christ took place and imitate his simple lifestyle.

And so, at Greccio, Italy, on Christmas Eve in 1223, Francis created a nativity scene, which amazed all who were present. On that cold night, he was joined by the townspeople and friars in celebrating Mass in a stable, with Francis himself chanting the Holy Gospel and preaching to the people.

This Christ-centered event, filled with great joy and thanksgiving, started the tradition of using a nativity scene for decoration during Advent and Christmas.

Pope Pius IX called him

- 'The most perfect image of our Lord that ever



Nine months after this midnight Mass, Francis received a vision of Christ while on a retreat. It was here that he received **the stigmata**, (he miraculously received the wounds of Jesus on his hands and feet.) He was the first to get this sign.