

Year of St Francis Prayer Trail.



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2026 marks the 800th anniversary of St Francis of Assisi's death

Pope Leo XIV declared that it will be a special Year of St Francis in which we are all called to become saints in our world, following St Francis' example.

Christians are called to model a holiness of life and witness to peace.

The Year runs from 10 January 2026 until 10 January 2027.

This pack contains photographs and detailed instructions for setting up six prayer stations that can be created by an individual school or clusters of schools to celebrate the Year of St Francis.

Reflecting on St Francis' love of creation and life of simplicity, the prayer stations and activities that have been suggested are simple, focusing on scripture, prayer and an opportunity to reflect.

There is an option to include a short stilling exercise at the start of each prayer station. This is an example of one that could be used:

Let us still our bodies and remember that God loves us ... (30 seconds)

Rest your hands gently in your lap. You may like to rest them on your knees.

Close your eyes gently. Listen to the sounds around you (15 seconds)

Listen to the sounds of your own breathing, even your heartbeat. (15 seconds)

Be aware of God's love, deep in your heart. (15 seconds)

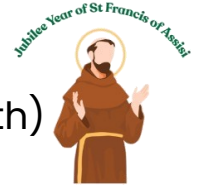
Listen to God, with an open heart and an open mind. Listen again to the sounds around you..... Slowly open your eyes.

You may wish to begin with an introduction to St Francis, a suggestion is on the next page.

Perhaps you would like to end the prayer trail with a small celebration—juice and biscuits. This may be an opportunity to invite parents and/ or parishioners at the end of the prayer trail to experience the stations.

This resource has been commissioned for the sole use of schools in the Diocese of Salford and should not be shared outside of the diocese. It has been produced by the Education department, the Environment department, the Formation department, Caritas Salford and the School Singing Programme.

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(The following are ideas to begin and / or end the prayer trail with)

We gather today to celebrate the life of a great Saint, St Francis of Assisi .

You, or someone you know might be named after this saint. Some of you may attend the school named after this saint or you may have a house or class named after St Francis of Assisi. In your school you will have a San Damiano cross that inspired St Francis to rebuild the Church, not church buildings but building the community of Christians.

St Francis encouraged people to think about their lives and try to live simply and ways that follow God's teaching: peace, love of people, care for creation and happiness.

You may wish to share the story of St Francis (there are examples on the next page).

Here is an adapted version of the prayer written by Pope Leo to mark the Year of St Francis:

Saint Francis, our brother, who went to heaven as a man of peace, pray for us before the Lord.

You saw true peace in the crucifix of San Damiano, help us to look to Jesus and learn how to love and forgive others.

Give us the courage to build bridges where the world builds borders.

In this time of conflict and division we pray that we may become peacemakers, witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ.

Amen.



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[A prayer from St Francis | CAFOD](#) Video

Link for Make me a Channel of Your Peace.

[Make me a channel of your peace](#) (Thank you to the pupils in Year 3,4 and 5 from St Anne and St Joseph's RC Primary School in Accrington through SSP)

You may want pupils to complete a pledge sheet to consider what they will take from the prayer stations...

Pledge Sheet.

I will try to be more like St Francis of Assisi by.....



Pledge Sheet.

I will try to be more like St Francis of Assisi by.....



Pledge Sheet.

I will try to be more like St Francis of Assisi by.....



Story of St Francis. (shorter version)



Francis was born in Italy, in a place called Assisi. His family were very wealthy and Francis spent his money on expensive clothes and food. One day whilst out riding on his horse, Francis came across a poor and sick man. Usually he would have turned away, but this time Francis got off his horse, gave the man his cloak and kissed him.

Francis started going to church every day. As he prayed in a chapel, he heard a voice say, "Rebuild my Church". Thinking that God was telling him to repair the chapel, Francis used his father's money and goods to rebuild it.

His father was very angry and had his son arrested for stealing. Francis returned all of the money and goods. He even stripped off all of the clothes he was wearing and gave them back to his father! A bishop quickly covered him with an old tunic. Francis continued to wear the old tunic for the rest of his life.

From then on Francis lived in poverty. He realised that when God asked him to 'Rebuild my Church' he meant the faith of people around the world.

Listening to God, Francis worked to make the church better by speaking up for the poor and looking after them. At the age of 44 St Francis died. His feast day is celebrated on the 4th October each year.

Story adapted from Catholic Children's Society. [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Story of Saint Francis. (longer version)



St Francis is one of the world's most famous saints. He was born 800 years ago in Italy, in a town called Assisi. Because of this, Assisi is now a famous place of pilgrimage. Every year millions of pilgrims from around the world visit Assisi to learn more about Saint Francis and to grow in faith.

Francis was born into a very wealthy family. As a young man he enjoyed spending lots of his family's money on fine clothes and parties. He was handsome, a trend setter, and even nicknamed the 'King of Parties' by his friends! But after a while, the fine clothes and lavish parties lost their appeal. Francis longed for something that would make him feel happy deep inside, not just on the outside. So Francis decided to become a soldier, he had always dreamed of becoming a knight in shining armour. However, in a battle he was captured and spent a year as a prisoner of war. Over this time, Francis spent a lot of time reflecting on his life and asking God what he should do next. God called Francis to help people know and follow His Son, Jesus. This would mean Francis would have to give up his wealth and fine clothes to live a simple life serving others. Francis trusted that following Jesus in this way would bring him more joy than wealth, fine clothes and parties ever could. As a sign of his new life, Francis began to wear the clothes of a poor peasant.

One of the ways Francis followed Jesus, was by caring for the sick and needy. In Francis' day, as in the time of Jesus, some people suffered from a painful illness called leprosy. Lepers were made to leave their jobs and homes and live on the edges of towns, as people feared they could catch the illness. Nobody ever came to help them; but Francis did. Following the example of Jesus, Francis would stay with the lepers and care for them. Like Jesus, Francis understood that all people had dignity and were loved equally by God the Father. No one is ever less important to God than anyone else, and so to Francis, everyone was as important as everyone else.

Story of Saint Francis. (longer version)



Francis knew how important it was to share the message of Jesus with all people, and he was very good at doing so. Because of this, thousands of people travelled to Assisi from all over Europe to hear him speak about Jesus and explain the Gospels to them. Francis would sometimes even preach to the birds and animals because he believed that the love of God should be shared with all living things. He once famously persuaded a wolf to stop attacking people, and persuaded the people to share their food with the wolf in turn!

Francis believed that everything God created was incredibly important. Everything in creation was part of God's family, so he called everything either a 'brother' or a 'sister.' For example, 'Brother Wind, Sister Earth'. Francis taught people about care for everything God created: people, animals, birds, plants, and the environment. This is a way Christians can love God and love each other.

Francis died at the age of 44 on the 3rd October 1226. Many people have followed in Francis footsteps: Franciscans are monks who follow Jesus and Saint Francis' example of humility, prayer, care for creation and care for the poor. There is also a women's group made up of nuns called the Poor Clares who also follow these principles.

Story adapted from Mission Together [Saint Francis of Assisi - Mission Together](#)