

## “The Unclothed Prophet”

### —A biographical flash story of Saint Francis of Assisi

Before he was a saint, he was Giovanni — Francesco, as his father called him, the silk merchant’s son. He laughed too loudly, dressed too richly, dreamed too recklessly. War called, and Francis answered, craving glory. But illness found him first, and in the silence of recovery, something shifted.

He began giving his wealth to the poor. Quietly at first, then with conviction. He prayed in ruins — the church of San Damiano crumbling around him — and claimed he heard Christ speak: “Rebuild my house.” So he did, stone by stone.

His father, Pietro Bernardone, enraged at the shame, dragged him before the bishop. Francis didn’t argue. He simply removed his fine clothes, folded them neatly, and laid them at his father’s feet. Naked, he said, “From now on, I have no father but God.”

He begged in the streets. Cared for lepers. Preached barefoot with joy. Men began to follow him — peasants, scholars, former knights — drawn by his simplicity, his fire. They were not priests. Just brothers, living the Gospel, owning nothing, loving all.

In 1209, Pope Innocent III, after a strange dream of the Church upheld by a ragged man, gave his blessing. The Order of Friars Minor was born. Francis refused to call it a revolution. He called it penance.

In his final years, nearly blind, his body broken by fasting and cold, Francis dictated the “Canticle of the Sun,” praising Sister Death. He died on the bare ground outside Assisi in 1226, singing.

He never sought sainthood. He only wanted to live like Christ — poor, joyful, and free.

And that, at last, made him unforgettable.

- DOMINIC

### We are Here a Reminder of our Shared City

For those of us who call the streets our temporary home, life in N.Y.C. presents a constant struggle for safety, comfort, and recognition. We navigate a world that often rushes by, where we can feel invisible amidst the crowds.

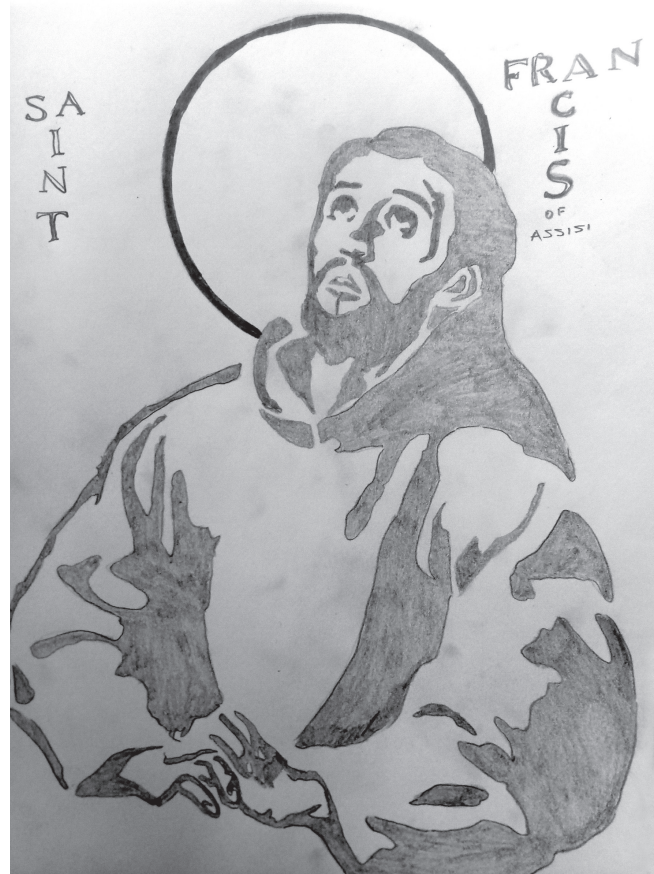
But we are here. We are part of this cities just as much as the towering buildings and bustling avenues. We have stories, experiences, and a resilience that often goes unseen. This isn’t a plea for pity, but a reminder of our shared humanity.

We are your neighbors, even if our circumstances are drastically different. We face the same sunrises and sunsets, the same changing seasons in this remarkable city.

Seeing each other acknowledging each with a nod or kind word, can make a profound difference. It reminds us that our presence is noted.

Let us continue to find strength in our shared experiences and to look out for one another In a city that can feel overwhelming our connections and our visibility matter. We are here, and we are part of the fabric of N.Y.C

- STEVE



Drawing by Joey

# STREET VOICES

## St. Francis Breadline Franciscan Bread for the Poor COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

V5 N32 ■ AUGUST 2025

If you have any content to share for our newsletter please see one of the breadline staff. **We are in need of content such as a poem, lyrics, writing, thoughts, questions, image of your artwork or anything uplifting or informative.** Anyone who contributes content for our newsletter will receive a \$10 gift card.

The St. Francis Breadline and this publication is made possible by the Our Lady of Guadalupe.

## FRANCISCAN 360 IS OPEN!

**WHAT:** Case Management, Computer Access, Mailing Address, Health Clinic

**WHERE:** 144 W. 32nd Street

**WHEN:** Monday - Thursday, 9am - 4pm  
Scheduled appointments only on Friday from 9am - 4pm

**WHO:** All are welcome!

**NEW:** Art and Guitar classes, Work space available  
Tuesday 9am - 11am

**Good morning!** This week’s special edition of the newsletter is inspired by the life and enduring legacy of St. Francis of Assisi. It features a collection of writings, art, and reflections from members of our community. Rhyan Scorpio-Rhys, Rodney Wise, Jane Farmer, and Dominic offer thoughtful biographical pieces on St. Francis’s life and impact, while Joey contributes a moving poem inspired by his example. Tina Spence shares a note of gratitude to St. Francis of Assisi Church, and Mercedes offers a devotional reminder of God’s beauty and love. Steve provides a powerful short writing on homelessness in New York City, and Steven Conti reflects poetically on the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi Church. Also included is a beautiful drawing of St. Francis by Joseph Richardson and a joyful illustration from Jim C., thanking the St. Francis Breadline. We hope you enjoy this edition and that it inspires and brings peace to your week.

MATTHEW 16:24

*24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*

**Be the first person to correctly answer all three trivia questions and win a gift card.**

What is St. Francis known as the patron saint of?

What did St. Francis do that caused friction with his father?

What did St. Francis do at Greccio that is significant?

**Answers to last weeks trivia questions**

Who was the rookie sensation for the Mets who became the all time strike our leader? Nolan Ryan

What pitcher for the Mets was nicknamed “Tom Terrific” and “the Franchise.”? Tom Seaver

Who has the most Yankee world series rings? Yogi Berria

## Thank you St. Francis Breadline

1 Corinthians 4:8 - You are already full, you have already become rich.  
Romans 14:17  
For the kingdom of God is not just a matter of eating and drinking  
But of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Thank you  
You have made full, you have already made rich  
For the kingdom of God is not just eating and drinking  
But of joy, peace and righteousness  
Once again thank you  
According to the St. Franciscan bread line website;  
Feeding Hope, Filling Hearts  
Everyday at 7am, dedicated volunteers joyfully greet over 300 guest at the breadline on West 31st street in New York City. Serving food dignity and compassion since 1930.

- TINA SPENCE

## The Saint Who Walked Barefoot

Before the statues, before the stained glass windows and birdbaths, St. Francis of Assisi was just a man—confused, searching, full of longing.

He was born in 1181 to a wealthy cloth merchant. His real name was Giovanni, but everyone called him Francesco, “the Frenchman,” a nickname from his love of songs and fine things. As a young man, Francis lived like a prince. Silk clothes, wild parties, expensive friends. He wasn’t evil—just comfortable, with no reason to look deeper.

Then came war. Captured in battle, he spent a year in a dark prison. That’s where the unraveling began. Illness followed. Depression. When he returned home, the world he once loved no longer fit. The music felt empty. The gold felt cold. Something in his heart had cracked open—and light was getting in.

One day, he came across a crumbling chapel in the countryside. Inside, he heard Christ speak to him—not in thunder, but in a whisper: “Francis, rebuild my church.”

He took it literally at first. He sold his father’s cloth to pay for bricks. His father disowned him. Francis gave back his inheritance, stripped off his rich clothes, and stood naked in the town square, choosing poverty like it was a treasure. To the world, he looked like a fool. But to the poor, he looked like one of them.

He walked barefoot through Italy, begging for food and sleeping under the stars. He kissed lepers. He wept over trees. He preached to birds. But he didn’t just love creation—he saw it as family. Brother Sun. Sister Moon. Brother Fire. Sister Death. He called the earth not “it,” but “her.”

Others followed him—not to live like monks behind monastery walls, but to walk among people, serve the poor, care for the sick, and live without greed. They were called the Friars Minor—the Little Brothers. Together, they formed the Franciscan Order.

Francis never became a priest. He never built a fortress of rules. His faith was simple, radical, and lived. He believed the gospel wasn’t meant to be explained—but embodied. That you preach most powerfully by how you treat the least of these. That the holy is found not in crowns or cathedrals, but in crumbling walls, in hungry mouths, in the tenderness of small things.

He died young, at 44, nearly blind and wracked with pain. But before he died, he sang. He thanked the earth. He called out to Sister Death like she was an old friend.

And for centuries now, his footsteps have echoed in every place where someone kneels beside the suffering, where someone chooses love over status, where someone says, “Let me carry that with you.”

The friars who serve meals at the Breadline, who offer kind words and clean socks and help filling out forms—they don’t do it to be heroes. They do it because Francis taught them that every person has dignity. That being poor doesn’t mean being lesser. That heaven starts with how we treat each other.

Francis didn’t just rebuild a chapel.

He rebuilt the idea that holiness belongs in the streets.

- RHYAN SCORPIO-RHYS

## ◉◉◉◉◉ The Legacy of St. Francis of Assisi ◉◉◉◉◉

St. Francis of Assisi who was an Italian Catholic friar, Deacon and mystic founded the (Franciscan) friars around 1181or1182.

He was a very popular Catholic Saint who was known for his love for nature and also God’s creation. He always reached out to the needy and the poor. His teachings continue to inspire millions all around the world today. Embracing a life of faith, love and service. The church of St. Francis of Assisi in Manhattan New York City , continues to feed the homeless 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This dedicated service has been going on for over 90 plus years. The Legacy of St. Francis Assisi continues to grow.

- RODNEY WISE

Saint Francis, humble soul, a guiding light,  
From Assisi’s hills, he took his flight.  
Renouncing wealth, embracing poor’s embrace,  
He found God’s love in every time and space.  
With birds and beasts, a gentle, loving bond,  
Preaching peace, his spirit went beyond.  
A steward of creation, pure and true,  
He taught us kindness, in all we say and do.  
For mercy, love, and nature’s sacred plea,  
He stood for unity, for all humanity.  
A testament to faith, a life serene,  
His legacy of compassion, ever green.

- JOEY



Cartoon illustration by Jim C.

St. Francis of Assisi was born in the 12th century, dying in the 13th and was canonized as a Saint on July 16, 1228 due to his many significant philanthropic deeds throughout his lifetime. Despite being a man of wealthy origins, he showed great sympathy and care towards the poor, at a time when many within his class did not care for the struggles of those considered “beneath them”. After seeking God’s counsel regarding God’s will for him through prayer as well as experiencing poverty for himself during an excursion to Rome, St. Francis began drawing closer to a life of sanctity. He would later repudiate his earthly possessions as well as his earthly family to immerse himself into the world of destitution. He subsequently began performing acts of charity as well as preaching to nearby villagers, amassing a following. He soon founded the Franciscan order, a group of penniless street preachers whose numbers quickly grew. The Franciscans devoted their lives to the service of others including prayer and charity with St. Francis himself performing miracles on those most in need. The Franciscan order lives on today with its members continuing to uphold the standard St. Francis set forth. The Church of St. Francis in New York City has personally saved me in my time of distress, most prominently with the morning breadline as well as with the drop-in center open during the weekday which provides many essential services for those in need of them. St. Francis set the caliber of what it means to truly care for others and to truly emulate the altruistic nature of Christ. He devoted his life to serving the under served at a cost to his own affluence and comfort without a second thought curbing his pilgrimage to live free from monetary aspirations and greed. The Franciscans continue to model themselves after him, changing countless lives for the better in the process. It is amazing that so many centuries after St. Francis of Assisi’s canonization, his impact is still felt and his influence continues to bring about goodness in the world. May we all look to him as an example of piety and an example of how to best live and abide by the word of our Lord.

- JANE FARMER

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