

October 2026

Autumn – the ‘season of mists and mellow fruitfulness’ as John Keats described it in his poem ‘To Autumn’. In our churches we are in the midst of harvest festivals and the national Church celebrates Creationtide which runs from September 1st until October 4th – very aptly as this is the festival day of St. Francis of Assisi who is recognised as the patron saint of ecology and animals.

St. Francis was born into a wealthy family in the twelfth century and went on to renounce all his worldly goods and family ties to live a life of poverty in dedication to God. He preached a gospel of repentance and together with a group of twelve disciples went to Rome and was given permission to follow the Franciscan rule of life which led to starting the Franciscan Order. The friars were street preachers with no possessions, working first in Umbria before spreading to the whole of Italy as their numbers grew. Later in life, after a spectacular vision from God, Francis received on his body the stigmata (wounds resembling those of Jesus after his crucifixion).

Francis had a special empathy with the environment – he considered all of nature to be a mirror of God and is often pictured in art surrounded by birds and animals. He called all creatures “brothers” and “sisters,” and, according to legend preached to the birds and even persuaded a wolf to stop attacking the people of the town of Gubbio and their livestock, as long as the townspeople agreed to feed the wolf. Francis made it his mission to spread awareness of the environment and animals through his sermons and as we look at the world around us – endangered species, changing climate, loss of habitat and so on – his message on caring for our wonderful natural world still rings true today.

God bless

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