

**Rev. Mary Haggerty**  
**Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi**  
**October 4, 2020**

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. Francis was born Francesco Bernadone in 1182 AD in Assisi, Italy. He was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant and he grew up in great privilege. He was what we might call a “spoiled rich kid.”

But after a great spiritual awakening, he gave up all his riches and dedicated his life to serving God and caring for the poor. Francis did this in a big, kind of crazy way. He took to heart St. Paul’s call to be “fools for Christ.” His foolishness included stripping his clothes off in public to renounce his father’s wealth and befriending all of God’s creatures even to the point of talking to the animals. He is said to have tamed a wolf and during the Crusades he walked unarmed across the desert right into the Sultan’s camp where he should have been killed. Instead, he meets with a Muslim leader and they listen to one another and end up parting on good terms.

Francis would go through the streets inviting everyone to sing with him. He was not the great intellectual thinker of the day. He was more the child-like one that Jesus refers to in today’s Gospel. His openness helped him to see the revelation of God in all of creation. Francis was unencumbered by what people thought or by the way things “should” be done. Instead he was open to God’s voice all around him and he wasn’t afraid to look foolish in responding to it.

Francis encourages us to dismantle the accepted wisdom of our day, the wisdom that says productivity and consumption and competition are what matter. Instead, Francis gives us a model of living in harmony with all of God’s creatures and God’s creation. Francis, “the fool” invites us to break open and play, to laugh at ourselves, and to rejoice in all the works of God’s hand.

What would happen if we were to embrace the overflowing goodness of God in everything that surrounds us, as Francis did? What would happen if we weren't so afraid of looking foolish? How might that change us? As we pray and sing the prayers of St. Francis this morning let us ask ourselves how the story of Francis calls each of us to our own path of holy foolishness.