

FRANCIS OF ASSISI: A LIFE IN PICTURES

The fresco cycle of the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi — attributed to Giotto — together with the fresco by Cimabue, tells the story of the life of Saint Francis.

The exhibition marks the 800th anniversary of his death (1226–2026) and takes place during the special Jubilee Year proclaimed by Pope Leo XIV.

«Thus the Lord gave me, Brother Francis, to begin doing penance in this way».

St. Francis of Assisi,
«The Testament»

Cimabue's fresco Madonna and Child with St. Francis



Author:
Cimabue
(Cenni di Pepo)

Location:
Lower Basilica
of San Francesco,
Assisi
(right transept)

Date:
c. 1285–1288

This is the only authentic likeness of St. Francis, painted by an artist who could have seen people who had known the saint in life. The static quality and Gothic conventions of Cimabue's style deliberately contrast with Giotto's living, narrative manner — which is why this fresco is traditionally regarded as the image closest to the saint's true appearance.

«Brothers, while we have time, let us do good».

St. Francis of Assisi
(attributed; cf. his final exhortation to the brothers)

Jubilee Year 2026-2027

DECREE OF THE APOSTOLIC PENITENTIARY

GRANTING A PLENARY INDULGENCE
FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH
OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

The eight-hundredth anniversary of the blessed passing
of Saint Francis of Assisi from earthly life
to his heavenly homeland (3 October 1226).
His Holiness Pope Leo XIV establishes that,
— **from 10 January 2026**
coinciding with the closing of the Ordinary Jubilee
— **until 10 January 2027,**
a special Year of Saint Francis shall be proclaimed.

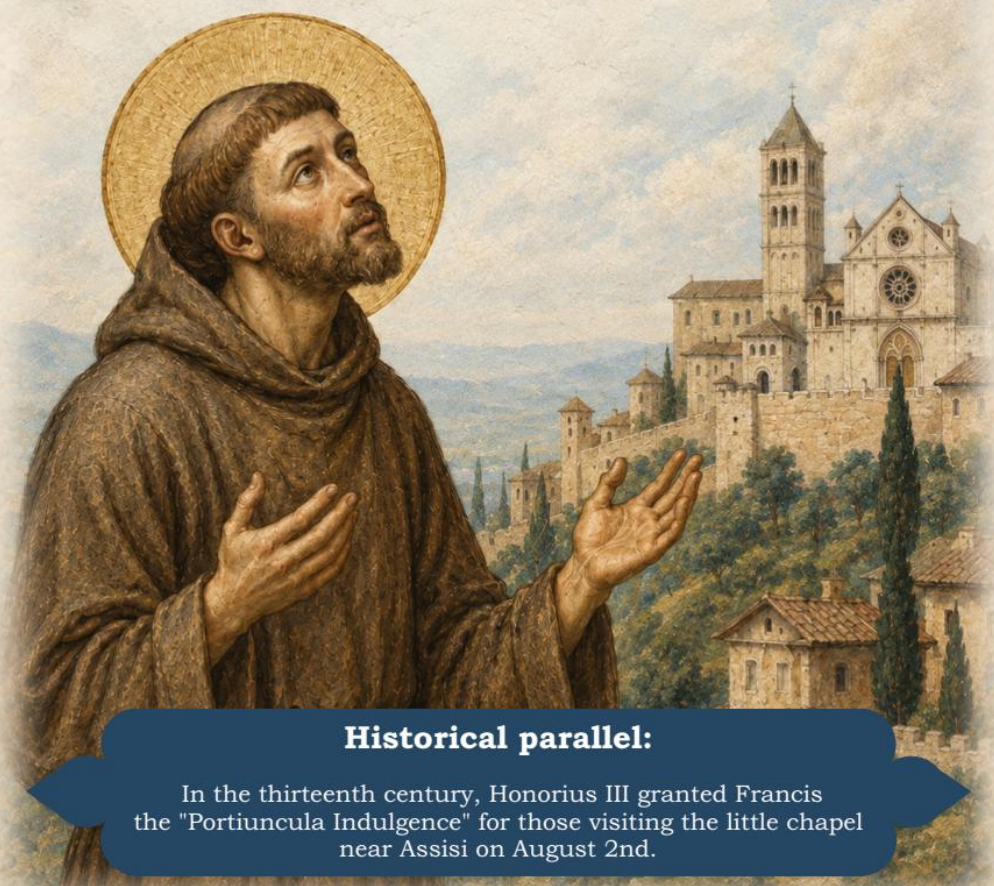
On this occasion the Apostolic Penitentiary grants
a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions
(sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion, and
prayer according to the intentions of the Holy Father),
which may also be offered in suffrage
for the souls in Purgatory.



Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary
(10.01.2026)

CONDITIONS FOR OBTAINING THE INDULGENCE

The Apostolic Penitentiary grants
a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions
(confession, Communion, and prayer for the intentions
of the Pope), which can be applied in suffrage
for the souls in Purgatory, to all the faithful who,
with hearts detached from any affection for sin,
make a pilgrimage to any church or place associated
with St. Francis, and there devoutly pray,
concluding with the Our Father, the Creed,
and an invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Francis,
St. Clare, and the saints of the Franciscan family.



Historical parallel:

In the thirteenth century, Honorius III granted Francis
the "Portiuncula Indulgence" for those visiting the little chapel
near Assisi on August 2nd.

Fresco

1

A simple man foretells the future glory of the young St. Francis

“ Indeed a certain exceptionally simple man of Assisi, whom it is believed God had instructed, whenever he chanced to meet Francis going through the city, used to take off his cloak and spread the garment under his feet, claiming that Francis was worthy of reverence, since he was destined to do great things in the near future and would be magnificently honoured by the entire body of the faithful.”

St. Bonaventure, «Legenda maior Sancti Francisci»



«He was destined to do great things».

Francis and the first brothers: the approval of the First Order (1209)

«Thus St. Francis, in 1209 (some sources say 1210), together with his brothers — who then, like the apostles, numbered twelve — set out for Rome to have his rule approved, appearing before the great successor of the chief of the apostles, Innocent III... The Pope blessed the Order of St. Francis, and this blessing opened the doors of the churches to the friars' preaching...».

V. L. Zadvorny,
«Complete Works and History of the Order»
(1995)

Fresco

2

Giving his cloak to a poor knight

“ ...he met a knight who was of noble birth but poor and badly clothed. Moved by a pious impulse of care for his poverty, he took off his own garments and clothed the man on the spot. At one and the same time he fulfilled the two-fold duty of covering over the embarrassment of a noble knight and relieving the want of a poor human being. ”

St. Bonaventure, «Legenda maior Sancti Francisci»



«Lord, make me an instrument of your peace».

Prayer of St. Francis

Prayer

before the Crucifix of San Damiano

«Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart, and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command».

St. Francis of Assisi,
San Damiano, spring 1206

...thus the voice from the crucifix of San Damiano led to the restoration of three churches — and in the last of these, the Portiuncula, several years later the Franciscan Order was born.

Fresco

3

St. Francis's dream of the palace

“ The following night, when he had fallen asleep, the divine kindness showed him a large and splendid palace with military arms emblazoned with the insignia of Christ's cross, in order to indicate vividly that the mercy he had shown to a poor knight, for love of the supreme King, would soon be repaid with an incomparable reward. He asked to whom these arms belonged, and the voice from heaven assured him that they were all for him and his soldiers. ”

St. Bonaventure, «Legenda maior Sancti Francisci»



«All this shall belong to him and his army».

A Salutation of the Virtues

«Hail, Queen Wisdom!
May the Lord protect You,
with Your Sister, holy pure Simplicity!
Lady holy Poverty,
may the Lord protect You,
with Your Sister, holy Humility!
Lady holy Charity,
may the Lord protect You,
with Your Sister, holy Obedience».

St. Francis of Assisi,
«A Salutation of the Virtues»

Fresco

4

The Crucifix of San Damiano

“ Praying one morning before the ancient crucifix in the dilapidated church of San Damiano near Assisi, Francis heard with his ears a voice coming down to him from the cross — and heard the same words spoken three times: 'Francis, go and repair my house — you see that it is all in ruins!’ ”

St. Bonaventure, «Legenda maior Sancti Francisci»



«Go, Francis, repair my house».

The Canticle of the Creatures

«Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory,
and the honour, and all blessing.
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no human is worthy to mention Your name.
Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially the Sun,
who is the day, and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
he bears a likeness of You, Most High One».

St. Francis of Assisi,
«The Canticle of the Creatures»