

A YOUTH DISCOVERS SAINT FRANCIS

"What would St. Francis be doing in the world today" was the topic of an essay contest for eighth graders at St. Hedwig School. Mrs. Sarah Visser, their 8th Grade Teacher, supervised the essay writing and submitted 60 essays to the local St. Maximilian Kolbe Secular Franciscan Fraternity, which sponsored the essay contest in an effort to interact with youth. The following is the winning article.

THE LIFE-CHANGING SAINT

by Niko Tulian, 8th Grade Student

If Saint Francis were here today, our world would be very different from what it is now. Based on his story and his actions, this is what I think Saint Francis of Assisi would be doing to help our world today.

Saint Francis of Assisi was the patron saint of animals and ecology. He was born in 1181 in Assisi, Italy. During his early life, he grew up with a wealthy merchant father. When he was young, he became very spoiled. While surrounded by all that great wealth, he spent most of his early days in luxury. But soon, war between Assisi and Perugia broke out. This is where the Story of Saint Francis of Assisi begins.

Even at the beginning of his life story, I can still pick apart the little details that would show what Francis would be doing today to help benefit our world. Even though he grew up surrounded by immense wealth, Saint Francis still took the heart to turn his life around and spend his life in poverty. He would set an amazing example by showing us to live a life of simplicity. He would show us how to value education more and preach to the sick and needy.

Saint Francis spent nearly a year in prison after the war. Because of his inexperience in battle, he was swiftly captured and taken for ransom. He spent his days in prison awaiting the payment from his father. It was here in this jail cell that Saint Francis started receiving visions from God.

The ransom was paid, and he was set free in 1203. He returned to Assisi a completely different man. When he returned he felt empty inside. Drained by war, he set out to find something to fill the void in his heart. One day in the countryside, he was riding on the back of his horse and encountered a leper. Lepers were thought to be unclean, and most people would politely avert their eyes and walk away. But Saint Francis felt sympathy, and embraced the leper. After the event, He felt a sense of pleasure and started to embrace this feeling.

If Saint Francis encountered someone suffering from a very similar disease, I am sure he would have done very much the same. He would have felt sympathy towards the suffering person and have given them the love that nobody else would. In this word today, we need more people like Saint Francis. If we did, this would set an excellent example for people to convert their life to a life of simplicity based around God. This life of simplicity would impact people suffering

from natural disasters, political wars and even everyday problems.

After the first encounter with the leper, Francis started spending more time in churches around his home town. Every day he prayed, searching for an answer to fill the emptiness he felt. Luckily he found some pleasure in helping care for and nurse lepers. But one day, while he was at prayer, Francis heard the voice of Christ telling him to live a life of great poverty and to devote himself to God, He was also instructed to rebuild the Christian church. He obeyed and began preaching the good word all around Assisi and was soon joined by 12 followers.

In the present, Saint Francis would try his hardest to help people across the world answer their call from Christ. Even if he had to fly all the way across the ocean, he would still try to find the money to help someone in need of help to answer a call from God.

Lastly, in the building of the Christian Church, Saint Francis needed to raise money for the project. To obtain the money he needed, he sold some of his father's belongings without his permission. When Saint Francis came to the bishop with the money, he was immediately told to return it. Out of sorrow for what he had done, he humbled himself further and left Assisi to preach the good word.

In the present day, I think Saint Francis would help anyone with a similar problem. If someone had done something they shouldn't have, he would encourage them to fix the problem and repent the very same way he did.

In conclusion, based on events that occurred during Saint Francis's lifetime, I bet that if he were here today he would encourage us to live a life of simplicity, show us how to give comfort to the sick and needy, help us answer a call from Christ, and help us solve all our problems whether they are big or small.



Left to Right: Mrs. Sarah Visser, Teacher; Niko Tulian, Contest Winner; Erin Rucker, Principal; and Diane Halal OFS, St. Maximilian Kolbe Secular Franciscan Fraternity