

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

Francis and the beggar

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

Francis had everything he wanted. His family was rich. His father owned a big company that bought and sold expensive cloth.

Francis had a lot of fun when he was young. He went to parties and liked to play the flute and to dance. He had fancy clothes, the best foods and plenty of money.

His father wanted Francis to become a partner in his cloth business. But Francis dreamed of becoming a famous knight, riding a white horse, doing brave deeds.

So one day Francis put on his heavy armor and mounted his horse. Carrying his spear in his right hand he rode off to fight the enemy.

Along the way he met another knight who was so poor that he had no armor, just a broken spear. His clothes were more like rags. His horse was thin and weak.

Francis felt so sorry for the sad knight that he gave him his own

shield and sword and his fancy clothes.

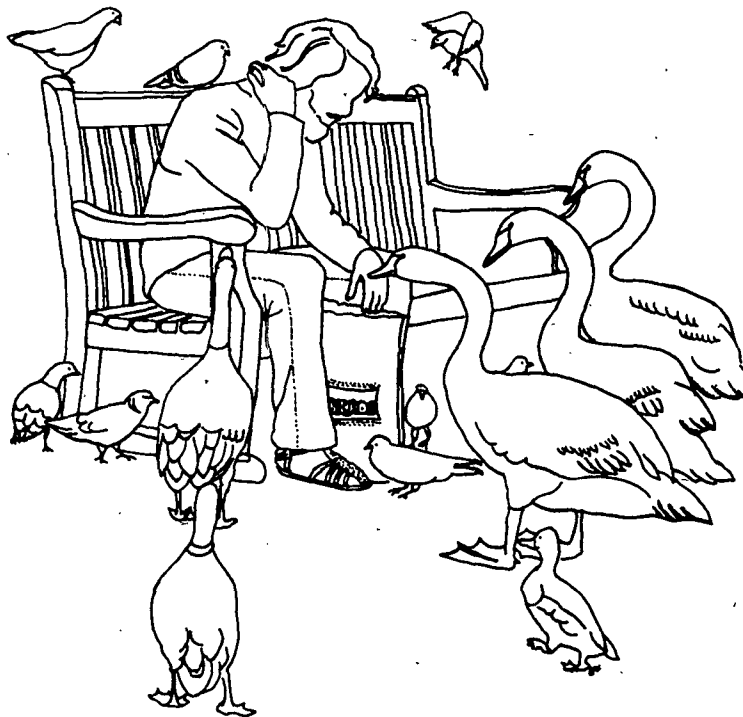
Afterward Francis began to think seriously about how he was living. He made a pilgrimage to Rome. There he saw people in the streets begging for money, food, clothes. Francis' heart was touched. He gave them all his money. Then he exchanged his clothes with one poor beggar.

One day he found a leper — a man with a terrible skin disease. No one would come near him. Francis hugged the man and took care of him.

Francis began to believe that people meet Christ especially in the poor. Francis read the Gospels and saw that Jesus lived a very simple life. He saw that Jesus was always with people no one else cared about — the poor and sick, lepers, sinners.

So Francis went back home to Assisi. He told his father he would not become a cloth merchant.

Francis moved out of his father's mansion. He began to live



a very simple and poor life. Like the town beggars he begged each day for a place to live, for food to eat and clothes to wear.

Francis' simplicity and care for the poor inspired many men and women to live as he did. They gave their money to the poor.

Francis and his brothers and sisters lived in huts and caves or in simple houses. They owned nothing. They begged every day for their food and a place to stay. They cared for sick and poor peo-

ple. They prayed. They preached to the people about Jesus Christ.

People called them Franciscans.

People who knew Francis began to think that he was very much like Jesus. The church recognizes him as a saint. His feast day is celebrated every Oct. 4.

(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)

A PUZZLEMENT

Unscramble the words below. All the words are in this week's children's story. Another word is spelled out in the boxes with the circles.

Example: 1. gerbag **B E G G A R** (beggar)

2. rancfis

3. pesogls

4. taisn

5. mpiles

6. susej

7. thgkni

Answers: 2. Francis, 3. Gospels, 4. saint, 5. simple, 6. Jesus, 7. knight

HOW ABOUT YOU?

The people of the church always seem fascinated by the memory of St. Francis. Why do you think Francis fascinates people and makes them feel happy?

Children's Reading Corner

"Bailey's Window" by Anne Lindbergh is a highly imaginative story about children learning to include another person in their lives. Bailey is a city cousin who comes to spend the summer with his country cousins. The country cousins don't really want him and he feels it. So he does everything he can to make them as miserable as he is. Then Bailey accidentally discovers a way to break the pattern of mistrust between him and his cousins. In the end the cousins decide to spend summer vacations and other holidays together on a regular basis. (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich Publishers, 1250 Sixth Ave., San Diego, Calif. 92101. Hardback, \$12.95.)



Trust

After ordination to the priesthood in his native Ireland, Father Peter Quinn came to America to give his life of priestly service to the disadvantaged living in our poorest home mission areas.

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