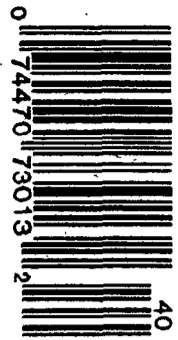


to **Life!** begins after page 6



Catholic Courier

DIocese OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 107 NO.53 ■ THURSDAY, October 3, 1996 ■ 75¢ ■ 16 PAGES/2 SECTIONS



St. Francis of Assisi: Patron of all life

His desire to imitate Jesus Christ being boundless, St. Francis of Assisi created a following unmatched by few – if any – Catholic figures in post-biblical times.

In the 1923 biography *St. Francis of Assisi*, British author G.K. Chesterton likened the saint's influence to "an earthquake or a volcano, an explosion that drove outward with dynamic energy the forces stored up by ten centuries."

And, nearly 800 years after St. Francis began preaching in Italian cities and villages, he still commands widespread reverence. Examples of such admiration range from the Franciscan religious communities of men and women; to Franciscan institutes of higher learning; to Catholic parishes that have chosen him as their patron saint; to special ceremonies in honor of his Oct. 4 feast day; to books, and even Hollywood movies, that explore his life, actions and writings.

Yet St. Francis never sought such adulation. As a young adult he rejected a comfortable lifestyle to follow Christ, and he spent his remaining years as a penniless man who walked barefoot, clad in nothing but a brown cloak.

"The simplicity of his spirituality – it's really something that touches most people. That's why he had such a following," remarked Father William Moorby, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Cata-tonk and St. John the Evangelist Church in Newark Valley.

"Francis always considered himself the least of his brethren. I think the most appealing thing about him was his humility," added Father Anthony Carozzo, a St. Bonaventure University vice-president who directs the Olean college's Franciscan Institute. The facility is the only center for Franciscan research and publishing in the United States.

Many Franciscan ideals are derived from St. Francis' compassion for all mankind: He was known to treat popes and lepers with equal reverence.

"He honored all men; that is, he not only loved but also respected them all," Chesterton stated.

St. Francis is also distinguished for his admiration of all forms of nature. Pope John Paul II recognized this devotion by designating St. Francis the Patron Saint of Ecology in 1980.

St. Francis' love of nature is perhaps best summed up in his most renowned composition, the "Canticle of Brother Sun," in which the saint pays homage to the sun, moon, wind, air, water, fire and earth.

This sentiment will be acknowledged when Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier hosts an environmental concern program, "The Earth is the Lord's." The third annual event will take place Oct. 3 at the Catholic Charities office in Elmira.

The program will highlight such rural issues as land use, development, stewardship, poverty and hunger, and the decline in family farming. According to event coordinator Kathy Dubel, these are matters that St. Francis would have prioritized as well.

Continued on page 10

Story by Mike Latona

Illustration by Amy Sundstrom

More about Blessing of the Pets on Calendar (Page 5) and On the Move (Page 6 & 7)