

Symbols of St. Francis of Assisi

Outdoor Scavenger Hunt

a bird	a dog	five red objects
		
an animal		something brown
something knotted	rays of light	something that appears fiery

Discussion Points

- **a bird:** Many images of St. Francis include birds. According to legend, St. Francis preached to the birds and encouraged them to be thankful to God for their beauty. Legend also says that birds would be silent when he spoke and only left his side when dismissed by him.
- **a dog (representing, for us, a wolf):** Legend says that St. Francis came upon a village called Gubbio in his travels where people were going to kill a wolf, because it was attacking children. St. Francis, then, spoke with the wolf and convinced the villagers not to it. After this time, it is said that the wolf never harmed the children and was instead taken in as a pet by the village.
- **five red objects (representing, for us, stigmata):** Francis was the first documented person to experience Christ's Passion or stigmata – body marks, sores, or sensations of pain in locations that correspond to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ – in the year 1224.
- **an animal:** It is said that St. Francis could communicate with animals and felt one with all creation. He had a great love for animals, and is patron to them, so many churches offer animal blessing services on or around his feast day.
- **Saint Francis of Assisi:** "The oldest surviving depiction of Saint Francis is a fresco near the entrance of the Benedictine abbey of Subiaco, painted between March 1228 and March 1229. He is depicted without the stigmata, but the image is a religious image and not a portrait." (from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_of_Assisi)
- **something brown (representing, for us, Francis' robe):** In a dramatic public dispute with his father, Francis renounced his family's business and declined his future inheritance, returning money, stripping himself naked, and handing his clothes to his father, so he would owe nothing to his father. At that moment, he pledged to live a life of simplicity in joyful service of the Lord and was given a brown tunic, a rope belt, and a pair of sandals, which eventually became the religious habit of his new community.
- **something knotted (representing, for us, the three knots in S. Francis' cord belt):** Almost all images of St. Francis depict him in his brown habit with three-knotted cincture that evokes the three vows his order took – poverty, chastity and obedience
- **rays of light:** St. Francis is often depicted with five rays of light symbolizing his reception of grace and union with Christ in receiving stigmata..
- **something that appears fiery:** Fire is a symbol of St. Francis, because his heart was on fire with love for God, and, it is said that, when St. Francis prayed, the surrounding areas would become so bright that people thought places were on fire.