

Wolf of Gubbio: An Invitation to Peacemaking from the Life of St. Francis: Reconciliation, by: Bro. Didacus R. Wilson, T.O.R.

There was in the town of Gubbio a fearfully large and fierce wolf which was so rabid with hunger that it devoured not only animals, but humans too. It was so fierce that the whole town was in terror, afraid to go outside the walls.

Francis went out to meet the wolf, blessed it, and said: "Brother Wolf, you have done great harm to this region, not only destroying other creatures without mercy, but you even have the brazenness to kill and devour human beings made in the image of God. You deserve severe punishment; but I want to make peace between you and the town, so that they will not be harmed by you anymore and after they have forgiven you, neither men or dogs will pursue you any more."

The wolf indicated that it would accept these terms, and offered the saint his paw as a sign of the pact, "I promise that the town will feed you every day; I know that what you did, you did out of hunger." The town promised to do what the saint had bargained, and the town adopted the wolf, and fed him until the day he died.

Reflection:

Whether the wolf was real or whether he symbolized 'il lupo,' the murderer and thief, the story points out the need for the ministry of reconciliation whether by prayer or activity. Indeed, Francis' whole life was marked by peacemaking, despite his youthful experiences of war. He was a peacemaker amongst the factions of Assisi, between sultans, kings and bishops, as well as wild animals. The prayer of reconciliation most people associate with St. Francis is "make me an instrument of your peace," though this prayer can only be found in twentieth century sources and is therefore not an authentic prayer written by St. Francis. However, it does express, most poetically, the spirit of Francis' life and vision. It is, without a doubt, A Franciscan Peace Prayer. So, the next time you pray this popular prayer, keep in mind Francis' invitation to be a reconciler in a world often torn by anger, violence and despair.

Call to Action:

1. Focus on people's good points. Tell all with whom you come into contact the good things you see in them.
2. Develop a positive approach toward life. Compliment more than you criticize.
3. Build a climate of trust and support in all your relationships. Cooperate with others instead of competing with them.
4. Use gentle, loving, respectful language when dealing with others. They won't hear your words if they are too busy dodging your sharp tongue.
5. Take a genuine interest in the work and activities of others. Make a point to ask about new projects.
6. Listen patiently, with your heart, when others are talking. Its Christlike to put aside one's own interests for the love of another.
7. Learn how to refuse with a smile. If you have to say "no" to something, do it respectfully.
8. Put the devil of jealousy far behind you. Deal with your personal insecurities in some other ways, but don't put others down to make yourself look better.
9. Be loyal. Never allow yourself to tear down the kingdom of God by destructive, behind-the-back criticism of others.
10. Do extra little things that are nobody's job. Be generous by volunteering—especially for the jobs for which there is no great reward.

Putting these all together is another way of being an instrument of peace in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi. Let us learn to tame too what is wild and violent within ourselves and the world around us.