



Love for All the Creatures

Christianity

When he [Francis of Assisi] washed his hands, he chose a place where the water of these ablutions should not be trodden by his feet. When he had to walk on stones, his step was gentle and respectful for the love of the one who is called stone.

If he recited the passage of the Psalm, *Thou didst exalt me upon a rock*, out of reverence and devotion he changed it to ‘under the foot of the rock hast Thou exalted me.’ To the brother who cut the wood for the monks’ fire he recommended that he not cut the whole tree, but only a part, so that the plant could continue to live. This same he ordered to a brother who was where he resided.

To the brother who cultivated the garden, he told him not to dedicate all the land to the cultivation of edible vegetables, but to set aside some part so that it would produce green grass and, in their time, sister flowers. Moreover, he said that brother gardener should have in some place of the garden a beautiful garden where he cultivated all kinds of aromatic herbs and plants with beautiful blooms. This in order to, in their season, invite all those who contemplated them to praise God, because every creature says and proclaims: ‘God hath made me on account of thee, O man!’

We who have lived with him have been able to appreciate how he found a motive of intimate joy in almost all creatures, a joy which manifested interiorly. How he caressed them and contemplated them lovingly, as if his spirit were not on earth, but in heaven. And it is true and manifest that, because of the many consolations he had received

from the creatures of God, he composed, shortly before his death, some praises of the Lord for his creatures, to move the hearts of those who heard them to praise God and so that the Lord would be praised by all in his creatures. □

Anonymous, attributed to Leo of Assisi, in *The Mirror of Perfection*.

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Comments

Francis of Assisi could be said to be an atypical saint in Christianity, among other things because of his obvious love for the natural world, which he saw as a way to the spiritual world and the heights of the divine. This fact, within a religion that, since shortly after its beginnings, tried to draw a radical line of separation with everything that was natural, instinctive and even intuitive –considering it as sinful or, at least, a way of temptation and perversion for the human being– makes Francis a true spiritual innovator in his tradition. In this way, the mystic of Assisi opened a path of connection between the Christian faithful and their natural environment, providing an opportunity for the development of a deep spirituality through the simple contemplation of nature.

Sources

Anonymous (2006). Amor a las criaturas. In *La leyenda de Perusa* (paragraph 88). Palma de Mallorca: Franciscanos T.O.R.

Associated text of the Earth Charter

Principle 2: Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.

Other passages that this story illustrates

Preamble: The Challenges Ahead.- The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life.

