



FRANCIS
— AND —
FRIENDS

LEADER'S
GUIDE

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The Great Commandment

“You shall love the Lord your God
with all your Heart,
and all your Soul,
and all your Mind,
and with all your Strength.”

The Gospel of Mark 12:30

Dear Leaders

As a father of two, I've always wanted resources that would help kids better explore our spirituality through time in nature. As a pastor, I've always wanted a fun way to teach people about the essentials of living a fulfilled and faithful life. Francis and Friends is the expression of both of these longings of my soul.

Much has been written in recent years about “nature deficit disorder” among our children, a phrase coined by Richard Louv and explained in his book *The Last Child in the Woods* among others. Time spent in nature is a primary way for kids to grow physically, mentally, emotionally and spirituality. We are in danger of losing this connection as we become more and more insulated from the world around us. Francis and Friends is a resource to help churches, families and communities get kids back outdoors: to be filled with awe and wonder and to strengthen family bonds. It is built upon the loving, inclusive teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare and it centers each child's life in the Great Commandment to love God with all our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength.

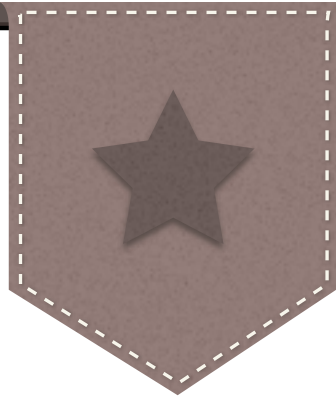
Francis and Friends is part of the larger Following the Way® family of resources. I am creating these programs to help people realize the amazing potential of a life full of love for God, self and others. To learn more, visit www.followingtheway.me

May you laugh, learn and love as your family goes Following the Way with Francis and Friends.



Christ's peace,
Rich

Rev. Rich Nelson is a disciple of Jesus, father of two boys, and an Episcopal priest. He has served as a pastor of both Episcopal and Lutheran churches, as a K-9th grade school chaplain, and as co-founder of a community non-profit outreach. His current work centers around creating resources for deeper discipleship based around the Shema/Great Commandment. For more information about Rich and his work visit www.revrichnelson.com



Welcome to the Francis and Friends Club!

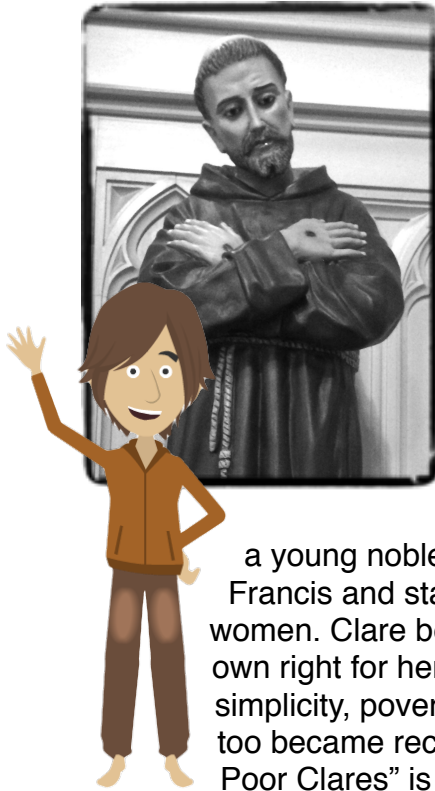
Congratulations! You've chosen to connect kids to God by giving them the gift of time in nature. There may be no better way!

Following the Way[®] with Francis and Friends is a program with five main lessons. Each lesson introduces children to the loving, inclusive teachings of St. Francis and St. Clare; engages them in fun outdoor-based activities, and helps them find ways to connect with God and with one another through time spent in nature.



	Introduction God loves everything God has made
	Heart We are called to help others
	Soul We are all brothers and sisters in God's family
	Mind We all live in God's kingdom
	Strength We are called to live simply and joyfully

About Our Cast of Friends



St. Francis of Assisi is perhaps the best-known and most-beloved saint who ever lived. Though he died eight hundred years ago, he still has a huge following today. Francis was born into a well-to-do family in Italy in 1181. He spent the first few years of his adult life without much of a spiritual focus. Like his father, he was wrapped up in chasing power, fame, and prestige. However, following a vision in which God urged Francis to “re-build my church,” Francis changed his life completely and dedicated himself to serving God and the poor. He soon had a group of other men who wanted to join him. It was not too long before

a young noble woman named Clare met Francis and started a similar group for women. Clare became well known in her own right for her similar commitment to simplicity, poverty, and compassion. She too became recognized as a saint and “the Poor Clares” is a movement that also continues to this day.



Francis appeals to a wide range of people because of his profound love for all living creatures, his love of the marginalized, his embrace of Sister Poverty, and his joyful love of God and all of creation. Francis continues to offer wisdom to us today as we seek to live out the Gospel. Francis and Clare’s simple messages of charity, joy and caring for creation naturally connects with children. This program seeks to make these values easily available to children and parents.



In this program you and your children will also meet Pastor Rich Nelson and his puppet animal friends, Danny the Donkey, Sally the Squirrel and Olivia the Owl as they learn about friendship through the stories of Francis and Clare.

How To Get Started

Francis and Friends is built around a series of five videos that introduce the program and the four elements of the "Great Commandment," loving God with all our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength. Each video features a cartoon story from the life of Francis and Clare and a skit with Danny, Sally and Olivia who face the same kinds of challenges that children face:

***learning to share with others,
feeling afraid of people or situations,
learning to put our trust God,
learning to be happy with what we have***

The Francis and Friends Group Curriculum is flexibly designed to be used in a variety of ways: as a church's Vacation Bible School or seasonal Sunday School, as an enrichment unit for a private school, as a Family Nature Club in your community, or as a weekend retreat. This is designed to be a simple, fun, and easy to use program. In addition to this Leader's Guide, you will find the activity guides and other resources on the Francis and Friends website.

This Group Curriculum gives you everything you need to have a great event:

- This reproducible Leaders' Guide
- A downloadable, reproducible Kids' Workbook
- Links to all 5 videos (downloadable as "skit and cartoon" or "just cartoon" versions)
- The puppet scripts so you have the option of doing the skits live if you choose
- Suggestions for finding local faith and nature resources
- Suggestions for songs and worship
- Suggestions for decorations and links to supplies
- A private Facebook Group to share ideas with other leaders
- A Promotional Video
- Printable Promotional Posters and Fliers
- Five Merit Medals (additional medals available for \$10 each)

In addition to this Leaders' Guide, you can find links to the rest of these materials by:

- 1. Going to www.francisandfriends.org**
- 2. Selecting Login > Group Curriculum**
Use the password you received by email when you purchased the curriculum. This will bring you to the page with links to the downloadable resources and the pages with 30+ activities to choose from.
- 3. Any questions? Just ask! francisandfriendsclub@gmail.com**



Francis and Friends as a ... Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School is a perfect setting for using Francis and Friends! The five different lessons can be used over five days to create a fun and dynamic VBS event.

Suggested Schedule

Day 1 - Introduction

Day 2 - Heart

Day 3 - Soul

Day 4 - Mind

Day 5 - Strength

Gathering Time (15-20 minutes)

Welcome the children and perhaps sing an opening song. You can then choose to either show the video with both the skits and the cartoons together or you can choose to do the skits live, using the skit scripts found on the Group Curriculum website, and show just the cartoon video. There are suggested questions to ask the group following the videos. Then send them out in groups to do activities based on the theme of the day.

Activities Rotation (time varies depending on number of activities you choose)

On the Francis and Friends website, you will find two introductory activities for the Introduction Unit and 10 or more activities for each of the four main units, Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength. Choose from these activities to create your program. How many activities you need for each night depends on how many groups of children you will have.

On the next page is a suggested rotation schedule for a 2 hour evening VBS. Adapt as needed. To add a fifth group of children called "Group E," simply add in an "Activity 5" and extend the time by an additional 20 minutes.

In addition to the activities, we really encourage you to plug into the resource people you already have available in your own community, people such as park rangers, county agriculture agents, Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, the Audubon Society, local farmers/ranchers, etc. This creates a special program for your particular kids. See the Appendix - Community Resources for links that will help you connect to people locally.

Additionally, you will find a Francis and Friends Passport on the Introduction webpage at www.francisandfriends.org. Print as many copies of the passport as you will have children. They will assemble these on the first day. Purchase name badge holders that will allow them to tuck their passport inside. Children will have fun taking their passport around to each rotation and getting the rotation leader to stamp or sign in the space provided to show their progress!

Time	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
6:00-6:20	Gathering Time			
6:20-6:40	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4
6:40-7:00	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4	Activity 1
7:00-7:20	Activity 3	Activity 4	Activity 1	Activity 2
7:20-7:40	Activity 4	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
7:40-7:55	Sending Time			
7:55-8:00	Parent Pickup time			

Sending time (10-15 minutes)

Gather together again at the end to review the day and send kids home ready to return!

Parent Pages

Make copies of each lesson's Parent Page to send home to help parents continue the learning with their children.

Merit Medals

5 Merit Medals are included in the price of the Group Curriculum. (They will be mailed to the address you provided at checkout within 2-3 weeks of your order). You can use these as you choose. One fun way to incorporate them is to hide a medal each day, asking children to be on the lookout for it. This can be used as a way to emphasize the importance of being present in the moment, keeping your eyes open for God's unexpected surprises, etc. If you would like to purchase additional Merit Medals, they are available on the website for \$10 each.

See the Curriculum on page 15-36 to begin

See the Appendix for:

- Community Resources
- Suggested Songs
- Decoration Ideas
- Publicity Ideas



Francis and Friends as a ... Weekly Sunday School

Francis and Friends works great as a seasonal Sunday School curriculum. Each week, children are introduced to a new concept and guided in a group exercise to explore that week's concept in depth.

Suggested Schedule

Week 1 - Introduction

Week 2 - Heart

Week 3 - Soul

Week 4 - Mind

Week 5 - Strength

Gathering Time (15-20 minutes)

Welcome the children and perhaps sing an opening song. You can then choose to either show the video with both the skits and the cartoons together or you can choose to do the skits live, using the skit scripts found on the Group Curriculum website, and show just the cartoon video. There are suggested questions to ask the group following the videos. Then send them out in groups to do an activity based on the theme of the day.

Activities (20 minutes or more)

Choose one or more of the possible activities for the respective Heart, Soul, Mind, or Strength units. You can do the activity together if you are a fairly small group or break into smaller groups/families if you have a larger group.

A link to all of the activities can be found by logging in to the Group Curriculum website at www.francisandfriends.org

Sending time (10-15 minutes)

Gather together again at the end to review the day and send kids home ready to return!

Parent Pages

Make copies of each lesson's Parent Page to send home to help parents continue the learning with their children.

Merit Medals

5 Merit Medals are included in the price of the Group Curriculum. (They will be mailed to the address you provided at checkout within 2-3 weeks of your order). You can use these as you choose. One fun way to incorporate them is to hide a medal each week, asking children to be on the lookout for it. This can be used as a way to emphasize the importance of being present in the moment, keeping your eyes open for God's unexpected surprises, etc. If you would like to purchase additional Merit Medals, they are available on the website for \$10 each.

See the Curriculum on page 15-36 to begin

See the Appendix for:

- Community Resources
- Suggested Songs
- Decoration Ideas
- Publicity Ideas



Francis and Friends as a ... Nature Club or School Program

If you are a leader of a family nature club or a teacher at a private day school, Francis and Friends gives you what you need to create a fun seasonal program that helps your children connect with their spirituality through time in nature.

Suggested Schedule

Week 1 - Introduction

Week 2 - Heart

Week 3 - Soul

Week 4 - Mind

Week 5 - Strength

Gathering Time (15-20 minutes)

Welcome the children and perhaps sing an opening song. You can then choose to either show the video with both the skits and the cartoons together or you can choose to do the skits live, using the skit scripts found on the Group Curriculum website, and show just the cartoon video. There are suggested questions to ask the group following the videos. Then send them out in groups to do an activity based on the theme of the day.

Activities (20 minutes or longer)

Choose one or more of the possible activities for the respective Heart, Soul, Mind, or Strength units. You can do the activity together if you are a fairly small group or break into smaller groups/families if you have a larger group.

A link to all of the activities can be found by logging in to the Group Curriculum website at www.francisandfriends.org

Sending time (10-15 minutes)

Gather together again at the end to review the day and send kids home ready to return!

Parent Pages

Make copies of each lesson's Parent Page to send home to help parents continue the learning with their children.

Merit Medals

5 Merit Medals are included in the price of the Group Curriculum. (They will be mailed to the address you provided at checkout within 2-3 weeks of your order). You can use these as you choose. One fun way to incorporate them is to hide a medal each week, asking children to be on the lookout for it. This can be used as a way to emphasize the importance of being present in the moment, keeping your eyes open for God's unexpected surprises, etc. If you would like to purchase additional Merit Medals, they are available on the website for \$10 each.

See the Curriculum on page 15-36 to begin

See the Appendix for:

- Community Resources
- Suggested Songs
- Decoration Ideas
- Publicity Ideas



Francis and Friends as a ... Weekend Retreat

One successful way Francis and Friends has been used is as a weekend “family retreat.” If the retreat is held in a nature-based location (such as many retreat centers and church camps) it provides an ideal environment for the entire event.

Choose one or more of the possible activities for the respective Heart, Soul, Mind, or Strength units. You can do the activity together if you are a fairly small group or break into smaller groups/families if you have a larger group.

Friday night: Heart Unit

Puppet Skit: Olivia the Owl helps Danny the Donkey not be afraid of the dark
Cartoon: Francis learns to not be afraid of lepers
Suggested Activities: Eagle Eyes/Owl Eyes; For the Birds
Scripture connection: Mark 1:40-42
Nature connection: Brother Fire (build a campfire!)

Saturday morning: Soul Unit

Puppet Skit: Sally the Squirrel doesn't want to share her tree with Olivia the Owl
Cartoon: Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio
Suggested Activities: Nature Immersion; Peace Prayer
Scripture connection: Matthew 22:39
Nature connection: Sister Water (water play!)

Saturday afternoon: Mind Unit

Puppet Skit: Danny and Rich clean the barnyard
Cartoon: Francis and the boy with the doves
Suggested Activities: Circle of Life; Nature Scavenger Hunt
Scripture connection: Luke 18:15-17
Nature connection: Sister Earth (plant a new tree!)

Sunday morning: Strength Unit

Puppet Skit: Sally worries she doesn't have enough food
Cartoon: Francis and Clare find happiness in simple things
Suggested Activities: Spirit & Breath; Walking Meditation
Scripture connection: Matthew 6:25-34
Nature connection: Brother Wind (fly a kite!)

Merit Medals

5 Merit Medals are included in the price of the Group Curriculum. (They will be mailed to the address you provided at checkout within 2-3 weeks of your order). You can use these as you choose. One fun way to incorporate them is to hide the medals around your retreat area, asking children to be on the lookout for it. This can be used as a way to emphasize the importance of being present in the moment, keeping your eyes open for God's unexpected surprises, etc. If you would like to purchase additional Merit Medals, they are available on the website for \$10 each.

See the Curriculum on page 15-36 to begin

See the Appendix for:

- Community Resources
- Suggested Songs
- Decoration Ideas
- Publicity Ideas



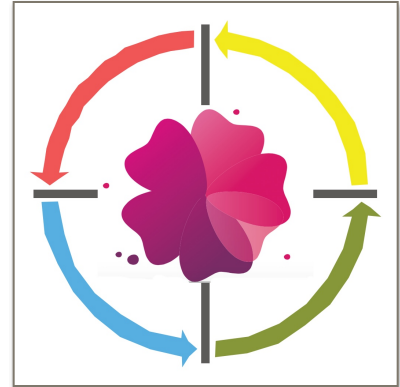
FRANCIS — AND — FRIENDS

The Curriculum

Introduction

God loves everything God has made

The introductory unit introduces children to all of the characters in the program, Danny the Donkey, Olivia the Owl, Sally the Squirrel, Francis, Clare and Rich. The themes of a loving God, the wonderful world God created, and our relationship with everything else in creation are emphasized.



Gathering Time

Welcome, Song, Skit and Cartoon:

Welcome all of the children, perhaps sing a song to gather everyone (see suggested list in the appendix), and either show or act out the skit and show the cartoon.

Video reflection questions:

Danny, Olivia, Sally and Rich love to be outside. What is your favorite place outside?

Francis explains the Great Commandment and lists four different ways we can love God. Can you remember what all four are? (If not, remind them).

1. Heart
2. Soul
3. Mind
4. Strength

Francis also read his poem “The Canticle of the Creatures.” He talked about Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brothers Wind and Air, Sister Water, Brother Fire, and Sister Earth. What is your favorite thing about nature? What makes it so special to you?



Scripture Verse: Mark 12:30

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Send to Activities:

Send children out as a whole group or in small groups to do the activity/ies you have chosen for the day.

Introduction Activities

For this first unit, there are two assigned activities. Each of these will help you complete the entire Francis and Friends program. Then choose as many other activities as you need from the Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength units!



1. Create your own Canticle

On the next page, you will find a copy of Francis' Canticle. Read through it again with the children and talk about each of the things Francis calls sister or brother. Ask them to talk about how important each of these things are to them. We need every one of them to help us live!

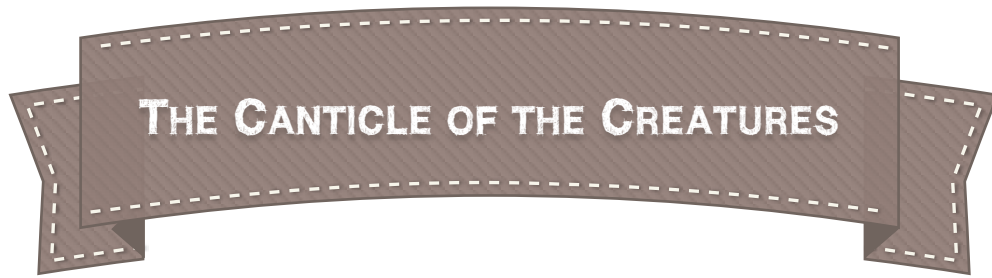
In the Kids' Workbook is a place for them to create their own canticle poem. Encourage them to write or draw a picture about things that are important to them. Ask them to take them home and post both Francis' canticle and their canticle someplace where they will be reminded daily of the importance of each part of creation in the family of God.

2. Create your own Passport

The passport will allow children to get stamps that mark their progress through the rotations each day. For written and video instructions, see the Introduction page on the website.

3. Choose as many additional activities as you need for the number of rotations you have from any of the Heart, Soul, Mind or Strength units.

www.francisandfriends.org



(earliest and simplest version)
by St. Francis of Assisi

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, honor and blessings.

To you alone, Most High, do they belong;
no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

We praise You, Lord, for all Your creatures,
especially for Brother Sun,
who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
of You Most High, he bears your likeness.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,
in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

We praise You, Lord, for Brothers Wind and Air,
fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Water,
so useful, humble, precious and pure.

We praise You, Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night.
He is beautiful, playful, robust, and strong.

We praise You, Lord, for Sister Earth,
who sustains us
with her fruits, colored flowers, and herbs.

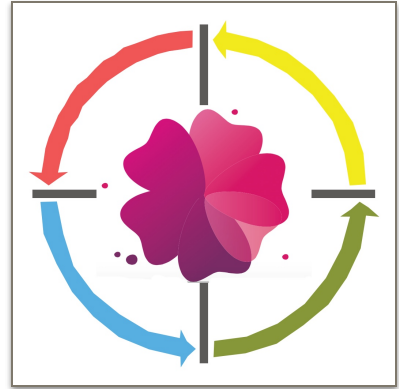
Intro Sending Time

Wrap up your time together as a whole group with the following:

Song

Choose a song from Appendix A to grab the kids attention and get them engaged as they enter the room.

Suggested Song: All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir



Share

Ask the children the following three questions:

1. Where did you see God today?
2. What did you learn about our world?
3. What's one thing you learned about how to love God?

Prayer

Lead the children in this "repeat after me" prayer:

Dear God,
Thank you for this day
And all the many ways
You love us.
Help us to always love you
With all our heart
With all our soul
With all our mind
And with all our strength.
In Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

Song

Choose another song to send the kids out ready to return next time.

Suggested Song: Everlasting Love



FRANCIS AND FRIENDS

Introduction
Parent Page

Canticle connection

The Francis and Friends adventure is built around St. Francis of Assisi's best known writing, "The Canticle of the Creatures." In this Canticle, Francis describes a world in which all of creation is understood to be our sisters and brothers. This is a beautiful worldview and adopting it would go a long way towards greater care for the environment, less fear and conflict, and greater global awareness and peace. Helping you encourage this kind of worldview in your children is a significant purpose of the Francis and Friends program. Each of the other four units (Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength) lifts up one line of the canticle and one aspect of creation (Brother Fire, Sister Water, Sister Earth, and Brother Wind). In this Introduction Unit, you will do the "Create your own Canticle" activity below to help your child explore the beauty of Francis' Canticle and incorporate this into their own Canticle they will create.

Developmental connection

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - At this age, children are really beginning to explore the world around themselves in independent ways. Allow your child to take the lead in some activities. Give them instructions in simple steps.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - At this age, children are becoming more aware of their place in the world. Ask them what they think and honor their ideas and opinions even if they are not fully formed yet.

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - At this age, children are facing more complex challenges in their daily life. Encourage them to describe the world they see around them.

Scripture connection: Mark 12:30

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

Commonly called The Great Commandment, this quote from Jesus is actually a repetition of the Shema, the foundational faith statement of the Jewish faith. Moses tells all the faithful to keep these words on their minds at all times, to receive them when they get up in the morning and go to bed at night, and to teach them to their children. These words are to be understood as the framework for living a fulfilled and faithful life. These words are the backbone of Francis and Friends and the other related Following the Way® programs.

Heart

We are called to help others

Early in his life, Francis had a profound experience that showed him that he was called to love and care for others, especially people that society had rejected. In the Heart unit we see that we too are called to care for others, sharing what we have with them and learning to truly love our neighbors as ourself.



Gathering Time

Welcome, Song, Skit and Cartoon:

Welcome all of the children, perhaps sing a song to gather everyone (see suggested list in the appendix), and either show or act out the skit and show the cartoon.

Video reflection questions:

In our video today, Danny the Donkey is afraid of the dark. What are you afraid of?

In the cartoon, Francis learns to overcome his fears and care for others. Why do you think he was afraid? What changed his mind?

Olivia the Owl helps Danny to not be afraid. We can overcome our fears to help others too. Who is someone you know who needs your help? How can you help them?

Scripture Verse: Mark 1:40-42

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.



Send to Activities:

Send children out as a whole group or in small groups to do the activity/ies you have chosen for the day.



You will find a variety of activities in the Heart Unit of the Francis and Friends website. Each of these activities fall under one of three groups:

1. Caring for others
2. Light (physical/spiritual)
3. Developmental (physical play)

Depending on the format of your program, choose from one or more of these activities as needed. And if you come up with an activity idea of your own, you can share your ideas in the Comments or Pinterest sections of the Heart Unit!

Don't forget to have kids track their progress on the Passport!

www.francisandfriends.org

Heart Sending Time

Wrap up your time together as a whole group with the following:

Song

Choose a song from Appendix A to grab the kids attention and get them engaged as they enter the room.

Suggested Song: I Just Wanna Be a Sheep

Share

Ask the children the following three questions:

1. Where did you see God today?
2. What did you learn about our world?
3. What's one thing you learned about how to love God?

Prayer

Lead the children in this "repeat after me" prayer:

Dear God,
Help us to not be afraid
And have the courage
To stand up for others.
Help us to always love you
With all our heart
With all our soul
With all our mind
And with all our strength.
In Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

Song

Choose another song to send the kids out ready to return next time.

Suggested Song: Jesus Love the Little Children





FRANCIS AND FRIENDS

Heart
Parent Page

Canticle connection: Brother Fire (plus Brother Sun and Sister Moon)

In the Canticle of the Creatures, it says that Brother Sun “bears the likeness of God.” Like God, Brother Sun is the source of all life and light. Like us, Sister Moon is a reflection of the sun, casting light to dark places. And Brother Fire is “beautiful, playful, robust and strong.” How can our reflection and co-creation of the light and love of God be done in a way that we too are “beautiful, playful, robust and strong?”

Developmental connection

Loving God with all our Heart is about serving others and caring about justice for all.

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - At this age, life can be pretty scary. There is a lot of unknown and many real dangers (traffic, fire, water, strangers, etc.). Help your child understand why some things are dangerous and how to stay safe.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - At this age, children are able to talk through their feelings more. Ask them to describe what makes them afraid. Assure them you are there to love and support them. What do they think makes other people afraid? Is there a way we can help them like Olivia helped Danny?

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - At this age, children can begin to understand the feelings of others and put themselves in their shoes. Ask your child about people who are less fortunate. How do they feel about that? What do they consider unfair or unjust about the world? What can your family do to help?

Scripture connection: Mark 1:40-42

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Jesus is an example of someone who helped other people at great personal risk. Sometimes, helping others will put us at risk too by either making us socially outcast, pushing us beyond our perceived limits, and at times even putting us in physical danger. How can your family balance the needs for safety and personal comfort with the responsibility of helping others who are in need?

Soul

We are called to live as members of one family

Francis and Clare created communities of brothers and sisters which extended out to all people and even all other creatures. In the Soul unit we hear the story of how Francis made friends with Brother Wolf, whom everyone else feared and hated.



Gathering Time

Welcome, Song, Skit and Cartoon:

Welcome all of the children, perhaps sing a song to gather everyone (see suggested list in the appendix), and either show or act out the skit and show the cartoon.

Video reflection questions:

Why do you think Sally the Squirrel didn't want to share the same tree with Olivia the Owl?

Have you ever had something you didn't want to share with someone else? What happened?

Francis helps the people of Gubbio make peace and share with the wolf. Why do you think the wolf decided to become friends with people?

Olivia and Sally decide to share with each other. What is something you have that you could share with someone?



Scripture Verse: Matthew 22:39

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Send to Activities:

Send children out as a whole group or in small groups to do the activity/ies you have chosen for the day.



You will find a variety of activities in the Soul Unit of the Francis and Friends website. Each of these activities fall under one of three groups:

1. Developing peace-filled relationships
2. Water (physical/spiritual)
3. Developmental (physical play)

Depending on the format of your program, choose from one or more of these activities as needed. And if you come up with an activity idea of your own, you can share your ideas in the Comments or Pinterest sections of the Soul Unit!

Don't forget to have kids track their progress on the Passport!

www.francisandfriends.org

Soul Sending Time

Wrap up your time together as a whole group with the following:

Song

Choose a song from Appendix A to grab the kids attention and get them engaged as they enter the room.
Suggested Song: *Peace Like a River*



Share

Ask the children the following three questions:

1. Where did you see God today?
2. What did you learn about our world?
3. What's one thing you learned about how to love God?

Prayer

Lead the children in this "repeat after me" prayer:

Dear God,
Help us to trust
In you enough
That we won't be too worried
To share with others.
Help us to always love you
With all our heart
With all our soul
With all our mind
And with all our strength.
In Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

Song

Choose another song to send the kids out ready to return next time.
Suggested Song: *Hip, Hip, Hooray (the Hippo Song)*



FRANCIS AND FRIENDS

Soul
Parent Page

Canticle connection: Sister Water

The Canticle describes Sister Water as “useful, humble, precious and pure.” Think of all the ways water is useful, all the many ways we depend on water. Water is humble, always seeking out the lowest places. Water is precious, and increasingly we realize how fragile our water supply can be. Water is pure, synonymous with cleansing and renewal. How can we appreciate the gift of water and seek to embody these same qualities ourselves?

Developmental connection

Loving God with all our Soul is about creating loving, healthy relationships with God, self and others.

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - The relationships children at this age have with others (both positive and negative) will have a lifelong impact on their personality and sense of self-worth. Give your children plenty of attention, encouragement and recognition to make sure you are developing a healthy parent/child relationship. Encourage them to play with other children and learn to share.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - Children at this age are more aware of the ways they can affect relationships rather than only receive them. They are able to focus on the needs of others and not just their own. Encourage them to be understanding, compassionate, and give other people the benefit of the doubt when they don't understand their actions.

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - At this age, children begin to have more independence from the family and are able to establish relationships on their own. They become more susceptible to peer pressure (both positive and negative). Talk with them about the importance of knowing how to handle people who may not have the best of intentions and discern where those intentions are coming from.

Scripture connection: Matthew 22:39

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Water has both adhesive and cohesive properties. Which is to say it is attracted to both that which is not water and that which is water. (Test it out with drops of water to see.) Likewise we are called to love those who are the similar to us and those who are different, to love our neighbor as ourself. How can something as simple as water remind us of this call and help us to live it out in our daily lives?

Mind

We are called to live in God's kingdom

The world came alive for Francis when he realized that we are all a part of one big family. He would even release rabbits from traps, fish from nets and birds on their way to the market so they could enjoy life longer. In our Mind unit, we come to see the interconnectedness of creation and the joy of understanding everyone's place in it.



Gathering Time

Welcome, Song, Skit and Cartoon:

Welcome all of the children, perhaps sing a song to gather everyone (see suggested list in the appendix), and either show or act out the skit and show the cartoon.

Video reflection questions:

Danny the Donkey didn't want to help take care of the barnyard. Why don't you think he wanted to help?

Have you ever had to help with something you didn't want to do?

Francis helps a boy have compassion on the doves he intends to sell to greedy men. How can you help someone deal with bullies?

Danny realizes that we all have our own special and honored place in creation. How can you show more respect and care for others?

Scripture Verse: Luke 18:15-17

People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."



Send to Activities:

Send children out as a whole group or in small groups to do the activity/ies you have chosen for the day.



You will find a variety of activities in the Mind Unit of the Francis and Friends website. Each of these activities fall under one of three groups:

1. Creation is holy and appreciating everything's place in God's family
2. Land (physical/spiritual)
3. Developmental (physical play)

Depending on the format of your program, choose from one or more of these activities as needed. And if you come up with an activity idea of your own, you can share your ideas in the Comments or Pinterest sections of the Mind Unit!

Don't forget to have kids track their progress on the Passport!

www.francisandfriends.org

Mind Sending Time

Wrap up your time together as a whole group with the following:

Song

Choose a song from Appendix A to grab the kids attention and get them engaged as they enter the room.

Suggested Song: Little Cabin In the Woods

Share

Ask the children the following three questions:

1. Where did you see God today?
2. What did you learn about our world?
3. What's one thing you learned about how to love God?

Prayer

Lead the children in this "repeat after me" prayer:

Dear God,
You created each of us special.
And you created all things wonderful.
Help us to always love you
With all our heart
With all our soul
With all our mind
And with all our strength.
In Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

Song

Choose another song to send the kids out ready to return next time.

Suggested Song: All Things Bright and Beautiful





FRANCIS AND FRIENDS

Mind
Parent Page

Canticle connection: Sister Earth

We are accustomed to referring to “Mother Earth,” and with good reason. The earth gives life to all living creatures. Here, Francis refers to Sister Earth and I wonder how that changes the relationship? Just as a mother can provide for us and we are grateful, at times a mother may provide for us and we take her for granted or even reject the love she offers. Sisters, on the other hand, are not so easily ignored. I am an older brother and feel a sense of protection for my sisters. They also can be frustrating with all their own ideas about how things should go, which do not always align with how I think things should go. A sister is someone you may argue with, but usually deep down you love them and want only the best for them. How can an image of “Sister Earth” help us remember to be more protective and loving towards her?

Developmental connection

Loving God with all our Mind is about a correct worldview, honoring all people and seeing creation as holy.

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - Encourage language development by reading to your preschooler and speaking to them in complete sentences. (It may be hard to drop the sweet baby talk but now is the time.) Read books that encourage openness and wonder. A list of books about St. Francis is included in the Francis and Friends’ Parent Introduction resource.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - Begin to introduce your child to the wider world. Seek out experiences of travel or multi-cultural events to broaden their horizons. Reinforce the message that God loves all people and all of creation and we have a special role to play in loving people, plants, and animals.

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - Be actively involved and interested in your child’s ongoing intellectual development. Ask them about their emerging worldview and their reaction to issues in the news. Be accepting of where they are developmentally while also encouraging them to see things from perspectives other than just their own.

Scripture connection: Luke 18:15-17

People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

Encouraging faith formation of our children is not about “teaching them things.” Jesus says they largely already get it. It is rather more about encouraging them to hold onto their innocence, trustfulness and loving outlook in the face of a world that can easily make us resentful, suspicious and jaded.

Strength

We are called to live simply and joyfully

Our children are bombarded with advertisements and consumerism, even though we know that the best things in life cannot be bought. In our Strength unit, we hear the story of Francis preaching to the birds to live fully into their “bird-nature” and consider how we too already have the gifts from God we truly need.



Gathering Time

Welcome, Song, Skit and Cartoon:

Welcome all of the children, perhaps sing a song to gather everyone (see suggested list in the appendix), and either show or act out the skit and show the cartoon.

Video reflection questions:

Sally is storing up nuts for the winter and is worried she doesn't have enough. Is there anything you worry you may not have enough of? How does that make you feel?

Francis and Clare decided they didn't need a bunch of “stuff” to be happy. They found happiness in simple, everyday things. What is something you already have that you can learn to enjoy more?

Sally realized she didn't need to worry after all. There were plenty of nuts to get her family through the winter. What is something you worry about that you could choose to not worry about? Remember to give thanks for what you do have instead of focus on wanting things you don't have.



Scripture Verse: Matthew 6:34

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.”

Send to Activities:

Send children out as a whole group or in small groups to do the activity/ies you have chosen for the day.



You will find a variety of activities in the Strength Unit of the Francis and Friends website. Each of these activities fall under one of three groups:

1. Living with joy, simplicity, and physical well-being
2. Air (physical/spiritual)
3. Developmental (physical play)

Depending on the format of your program, choose from one or more of these activities as needed. And if you come up with an activity idea of your own, you can share your ideas in the Comments or Pinterest sections of the Strength Unit!

Don't forget to have kids track their progress on the Passport!

www.francisandfriends.org

Strength Sending Time

Wrap up your time together as a whole group with the following:

Song

Choose a song from Appendix A to grab the kids attention and get them engaged as they enter the room.

Suggested Song: The Green Grass Grew All Around

Share

Ask the children the following three questions:

1. Where did you see God today?
2. What did you learn about our world?
3. What's one thing you learned about how to love God?

Prayer

Lead the children in this "repeat after me" prayer:

Dear God,
Help us to trust
In your care for us
And to be happy
With our many blessings.
Help us to always love you
With all our heart
With all our soul
With all our mind
And with all our strength.
In Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

Song

Choose another song to send the kids out ready to return next time.

Suggested Song: To You Oh Lord I Lift Up My Soul



Be sure to give each child their Completion Certificate before they leave!



FRANCIS AND FRIENDS

Strength
Parent Page

Canticle connection: Brother Wind

Like everything else in creation, Wind has the power to be either constructive or destructive. The entire weather system of our planet depends on the movements of the wind. These can bring us much needed warmer or cooler temperatures. They can bring us both rain and drought. They can bring us beautiful white clouds or hurricanes and tornadoes. Francis gives thanks for “all weather’s moods.” The Strength Unit is about becoming more accepting of things as they are, finding the goodness in what is, and appreciating a life of simplicity.

Developmental connection

Loving God with all our Strength is about living with joy, being present in the now, and being content with less when society tries to convince us we always need more.

Preschoolers (3-5 years old) - Make sure you are offering a variety of healthy choices to your child so they can develop an interest in them. Healthy food and drink options, things to do that don’t involve looking at a screen, and toys and games that require them to be physically active can all go a long way to helping them establish healthy patterns.

Early Elementary (6-8 years old) - Continue to ensure you are offering a variety of healthy choices for your child when it comes to nutrition and entertainment. Time spent outdoors naturally leads to increase physical activity. What new things are they able to do with their bigger bodies as far as climbing, hiking, etc. Longer attention spans will open up more possibilities as well.

Late Elementary (9-11 years old) - Involve your child in family decision making. Talk through what you will spend time and money on for holidays, vacations, entertainment, etc. Discuss ways in which choosing simpler options may allow more freedom, as well as extra time and money to spend elsewhere - perhaps in a way that helps others.

Scripture connection: Matthew 6:25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ... So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

There is, perhaps, a thin line between blatant naivety and a hopeful faith. Here Jesus isn’t saying food and clothing isn’t important. He is saying to put first things first (“strive first for the kingdom of God”) and trust that the material things will be there as you need them to be. This speaks loudly to a world that yearns for material possessions.

Appendix A - Community Resources

One of the magical things about a program like this is the ability to plug in resources and people from your local community. Nothing will make your program come alive like having a Master Gardener teach kids how to plant and care for their own vegetables, a Park Ranger come and show kids how to identify plants and animals in their area, or someone from the Audubon Society or the local zoo bring animals for the children to see and learn about.

Many organizations have people trained and ready to come and share with groups of children. Here are a few to get you started but also ask your leadership team who they know or what groups they have heard about in your area.

Master Gardeners (American Horticulture Society)

<http://www.ahs.org/gardening-resources/master-gardeners>

Master Naturalists - find a listing of state organizations at

<http://www.wildlifegardeners.org/forum/stewardship/2580-list-state-naturalist-master-naturalist-programs.html>

Park Rangers and Educators

Contact your local State Parks department or a nearby National Park to find what kinds of people, materials, etc. they may have to loan groups.

County Extension Agents

Find your local county extension agent who can connect you to a variety of local agriculture, nature and gardening resources

<http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/extension-search/>

Audubon Society

Find great local resources about birds in your area at

<http://www.audubon.org/audubon-near-you>

Community Supported Agriculture farmers and ranchers

Invite a local farmer interested in community connections at

<http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>

Children and Nature Network

Through the national Children and Nature Network's website, you can find local organizations concerned about keeping kids connected to nature.

<http://directory.childrenandnature.org/map/index/C91/91/>

Find nature

Locate public nature areas near you.

- Nature Find <https://www.naturefind.com/search/>
- In the UK <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/reserves>
- Nature Conservancy links <http://blog.nature.org/science/2016/07/12/how-to-find-things-to-do-in-nature-near-you/>
- Search for state and national parks in your area

And here are some bonus links with great general information:

Educate yourself about the wonders of the world

- Nature Conservancy blog <http://blog.nature.org/science/section/nature-and-you/>
- Learn About Nature <http://www.learnaboutnature.com>
- National Geographic Kids <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com>
- Nature Explore <https://natureexplore.org/family/>

Awesome nature videos

- Ted <http://ed.ted.com/series/awesome-nature>
- PBS <http://video.pbs.org/program/nature/>
- Veritasium <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHnyfMqiRRG1u-2MsSQLbXA>

Scripture about nature

- Lutherans Restoring Creation <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/bible-and-ecology-resources/bible-verses-on-nature-and-care-for-creation>
- Topical <http://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-nature/>

Appendix B - Suggested Songs

Many of these classic songs are perfect compliments to the themes of this program. Below are links to lyrics and chords (if you plan to play the songs on guitar) and also links to purchase the songs on iTunes (if you plan to have the kids sing along to recordings).

All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes
All Things Bright and Beautiful	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes
Everlasting Love	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes
The Green Grass Grew All Around	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes
He's Got the Whole World in His Hands	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes
Hip, Hip, Hooray (Hippo Song)	Lyrics	iTunes
I Just Wanna Be a Sheep	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes
Jesus Loves the Little Children	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes
Little Cabin in the Woods	Lyrics	iTunes
Peace Like a River	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes
To You Oh Lord I Lift Up My Soul	Lyrics/Chords	iTunes

Places to find additional songs:

Scout Songs has dozens of great songs, some religious but most not, that have nature themes that compliment this program

<http://www.scoutsongs.com>

The National Institute of Health (believe it or not) likewise has a number of classic kids songs, along with lyrics and a reminder of how the song goes

<http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/songs/childrens/index.htm>

Appendix C - Decoration Ideas

One of the great things about doing a Francis and Friends event is that you don't need to spend a bunch of money on cardboard cutouts and things from the dollar store trying to "create" a fun, interactive space indoors. That space already exists for you right outside. So please, don't go through the trouble to try to create that inside. Enjoy and appreciate what already exists.

You may be fortunate enough to live near a nature park, state park, or church grounds or other private property that is kid safe. If so, help your kids connect with that space by all means. But we know not everyone is so fortunate. Most churches, communities, and schools, have outdoor space but it may need some help to become kid-friendly and engaging. For this, we suggest exploring ideas for "outdoor classrooms." Or even build a treehouse area. Below are a variety of links that will help you see what others have done with their outdoor space. And the best part - you don't throw it away when your program is done. It remains there to enjoy for years to come.

Pinterest - (God's gift to people needing creative inspiration)

<https://www.pinterest.com/revrichnelson/outdoor-playplaces/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/outdoor-classroom/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/debbiemays/outdoor-classroom/>

Nature Explore - designing outdoor spaces

<https://natureexplore.org/category/designing-outdoor-spaces/>

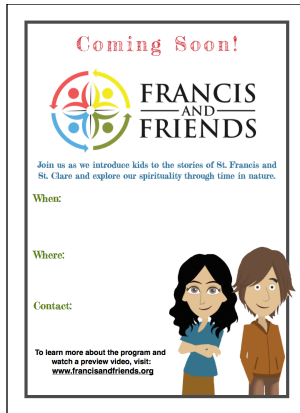
At a church I once served, our kids found some great big oak trees back in the woods. We cut a path, built a bridge, and cleared out a space to put some cedar benches in the round. It was an ideal setting for opening and closing worship and Sunday School throughout the year. Look at your own space and imagine what could be!



Appendix D - Publicity Ideas

Log in to the Francis and Friends website, www.francisandfriends.org, to download the following publicity items:

Posters



A downloadable pdf of the Francis and Friends poster is available on the website in two different sizes:

8.5x11

11x17

Video

On the website you will find a promotional video that can be downloaded, streamed, or embedded as you need.

Social Media



On the website you will also find downloadable versions of the Francis and Friends logo you can use for posts to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, your website, newsletters, and wherever else you might need it.

Share the fun

Please Like Francis and Friends on Facebook and Pinterest. We are a small, independent publisher and word of mouth really helps!

Appendix E - Frequently Asked Questions

Do You Need to Be a Christian to Use Francis and Friends?

The teachings of Francis and Clare are almost universally admired by people of all faiths. They speak to common human themes of care for others, the kinship of all creation, and the value of a life lived with simplicity and genuine love. This program is created by Christians and Jesus' teachings are featured. However, this is not done in a proselytizing way. We honor the value and inherent worth of every major world religion. We genuinely hope that people of all faiths will enjoy Francis and Friends.

God's Creation is discussed a lot. Is this program "Creationist"?

No. We speak of God's creation as a way to recognize that God is the source of all life. We do not see a conflict between science and religion and this program does not espouse any particular theory about *how* the world came into being. We focus instead on the relationship between God, humanity, and the rest of nature and our important role as protector of our planet. By seeing all things as "brothers and sisters" as Francis taught, we grow into a deeper appreciation of our mutual source and destiny.



Is There a Meaning to the Logo?

Yes! Glad you asked! Each of the four color quadrants represents one of the four aspects of the Great Commandment to love God with all our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength. The counter-clockwise rotation indicates that the journey described by Francis (and Clare, Jesus, and others) is counter-cultural to the values of the individualistic, consumerist society many people live by today. The figures in each of the four quadrants indicate children at play and, when viewed altogether, they form a flower - pointing towards the family faith and nature theme of the program.

What is this other "Following the Way" program about?

Following the Way® is the parent program of Francis and Friends. It is designed to enable adults (either in small groups or individually) to further explore the meaning of the Great Commandment in our daily lives. Learn more and discover your spiritual type at

www.followingtheway.me

Appendix F - Suggested Books about Francis & Clare

We encourage you to learn more about Francis and Clare! Below is a list of suggested works:

Children's Books

Brother Sun, Sister Moon
by Katherine Paterson et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/0811877345>

Adventures in Assisi: On the Path with St. Francis

by Amy Welborn et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1616366508>

The Song of Francis

by Tomie dePaola

Link: <http://amzn.com/039925210X>

Francis: The Poor Man of Assisi

by Tomie DePaola

Link: <http://amzn.com/0823408124>

Saint Francis of Assisi: A Life of Joy

by Robert F. Kennedy et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/0786818751>

The Prayer of St. Francis

by Francis of Assisi

Link: <http://amzn.com/0809167670>

Saint Francis of Assisi

by Joyce Denham et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1557255717>

Adult's Books

Francis: The Journey and the Dream
by Murray Bodo O.F.M. et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1616364106>

Francis and Clare: The Complete Works
(The Classics of Western Spirituality)

by Francis of Assisi et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/0809124467>

Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of
Francis of Assisi

by Richard Rohr O.F.M.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1616367016>

The Little Flowers of Saint Francis (Dover
Thrift Editions)

by Francis of Assisi et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/048643186X>

Tales of St. Francis: Ancient Stories for
Contemporary Living

by Murray Bodo

Link: <http://amzn.com/0307885844>

St. Clare: A Short Biography

by Joan Mueller O.S.C. et al.

Link: <http://amzn.com/1616365994>

Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love
by Ilia Delio O.S.F.

Link: <http://amzn.com/0867167890>

Saint Clare: Beyond the Legend

by Marco Bartoli

Link: <http://amzn.com/0867169508>

A Special Offer



Want to give your families the option to watch the videos and cartoons again and find more activities they can do together as a family?

They can with a Francis and Friends Family Membership! It never expires and gives them access to all of the videos and fun activities they can do together as a family.

To learn more about our Family Membership, visit:

www.francisandfriends.org

Special Discount: 25% off the purchase of a Family Membership for children who have already done the Group Curriculum. Just tell parents to enter coupon code: *FrancisFamily79* at checkout.

sale