Feast of St Francis

October 4, 2026

St Edmund's Pacifica

Today is the feast of St Francis and is the culmination of the celebration of the Season of Creation, an annual global ecumenical celebration of prayer and action for the environment which started on September 1.

By recognizing the environmental damage and acting to promote mutual well-being for both the Earth and humanity, we become partners of God in saving God's kingdom here on earth.

It is significant that the celebration of the season of creation ends on the feast of St Francis as he is the patron saint of animals and ecology. He saw all creation as his family, preaching to animals and calling the sun and moon his siblings.

Francis has captured the imaginations of modern people like no other saint. Whether we are Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Muslim, Buddhist, New Age practitioner, humanist or agnostic, we find him to be universally admired, emulated, and looked to as an example.

St. Francis did nothing less than challenge, purify, and transform the church of his time. Francis brought new life to a church that was becoming complacent and entrenched in the violence, darkness, and corruption of the time. Francis lived out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the spirit of radical hospitality, reconciliation, and joy that lifted up multitudes of people, and helped them to know purpose and joy in their faith again. And he continues to inspire people today.

From that time forward, Francis became detached from the desire to gain worldly power or influence and dedicated himself to following the Lord Jesus Christ in simplicity, humility and poverty, serving all people as brothers and sisters. He gathered a band of like-minded people

who went about the countryside preaching the love of God, the goodness of creation, and the need to live a life of radical simplicity and dependence on God alone.

Before his death, he exhorted his followers not to forget the aims of the Franciscan order—to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, to spread the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood in the family of God, and to live simply.

When he was dying, he asked to be laid down naked on the earth, a reminder of his mortality and return to the earth from which he came.

Today, in a world so very different from medieval Assisi, Francis continues to show us how as followers of Christ we are called to step out as bearers of peace and reconciliation between those who are at enmity.

Both then, and now, Francis models a radical hospitality where all are welcomed as the family of God, lepers, the poor, the prosperous, the ill, sinners, saints, creatures of God, and the earth itself, which sustains us on our earthly journey. And both then and now, he calls us to embrace the way of the cross as the way of peace, joy, and transformation.

We are called to stand in the vulnerable place of being reconcilers in a sometimes-hostile world. To stand in the courageous place of coming before our enemies bringing only hearts seeking to understand and heal, to listen, learn, and to be open to seeing the Holy in those we once feared. This is scary, and risky, and we can only do this by relying on Jesus, our cornerstone who goes behind us, before us, and within us.

Francis called all in his community to welcome the stranger, to embrace the leper, the poor, the outcast, for in doing so, we are welcoming the Lord Jesus himself.

We, here at St Edmund's, as the Body of Christ in the world, are called to offer his gracious welcome to all those who come to us, unconditionally, just as he loved us unconditionally and gave himself for us.

We are living in divisive times, where people are being driven apart rather than seeking to listen to each other and find common ground. Our culture glorifies violence as a solution to problems, and there is a disturbing lack of empathy in our relations with one another. It also seems as if we are losing our sense of belonging to a community, as more and more of us are living increasingly isolated, individualistic lives. Marginalized people are humiliated, despised, disowned and forgotten by the government and society that are supposed to help lift the lives of all the people and protect the rest of God's creation.

We need each other; we need to seek to build loving, life-giving communities. We fail to do so at our peril. And though it is important to work for legislation that seeks to stop violence and the degradation of the environment, lasting change comes from transformed hearts.

But despite of the darkness that envelop us, know that love, joy, peace, and truth will prevail. Never forget the hope that is in you. Take heart from the acts of courage and selfless love we saw from total strangers, from people who risked their own lives out of compassion and courage. Take heart from the example of Francis of Assisi, who taught us that perfect joy comes from being peacemakers and welcoming all people, and all God's creatures, as bearers of the Holy One. Take heart from Jesus, whose cross conquered the power of evil and sin and death forever and became God's cornerstone.

I am so glad to see our little creature siblings and friends in our midst eagerly waiting to be blessed: Georgie, Tuffy, Ginger, Oliver, Lottie, Persy and others who could not come today. Thanks be to God for the love and joy they bring us.

Happy Francistide, everyone! May we, like Francis, be joyful peacemakers and lovers of the Gospel. Amen.