

St. Francis of Assisi:

G.K. Chesterton



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St. Francis is one of the most popular saints and one of the most misunderstood. Chesterton says the world appreciates the saint but not the sanctity. Chesterton describes Francis' transition from being a soldier and fighter to being a builder and a reformer. He describes Francis as troubadour and a clown of God, singing and dancing for his Lord. Finally Chesterton probes deeply the saint's mysticism. The amazing thing about mysticism is how physical it is. Everything in the story of Francis is palpable. He gives away all his possessions to the poor, including the clothes off his back (and also, somewhat unwisely, all his father's possessions, too.) He hears the voice of Christ speaking to him from a crucifix hanging on the wall in the Church of St. Damian, asking to rebuild the church, and immediately gathers stones and starts to repair the building. He wears a rag, with a rope for a belt. He embraces poverty the way other men embrace wealth, he hungers after fasting the way others hunger for food. He embraces not only all men and women as his brothers and sisters, but all creatures great and small. After achieving a spiritual depth that would have been more than enough for the rest of us, Francis rushes farther, deeper. He disappears into a cave to be alone with God.



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