St. Francis of Assisi

One of the favourite Christian saints of Mahatma Gandhi was St. Francis of Assisi. We have recently come across beautifully worded brief biographical sketch which we are reproducing on the following page. We also felt it would be relevant to reproduce some of the remarks made by Gandhiji and others on the venerable saint. These are given below.


“….Our shastras seem to teach that a man who really practices ahimsa in its fullness has the world at his feet, he so affects his surroundings that even the snakes and other venomous reptiles do him no harm. This is said to have been the experience of St. Francis of Assisi.”

M. K. Gandhi
(CWMG-vol.13, pg-295)

From a Letter to Kanti Gandhi by Mahatma Gandhi

January 23, 1932

Chi. * Kanti,

“I was glad to get your letter. Personally I was very happy that all of you were given a taste of the Government’s kindness. If the experience does not make us angry but, on the contrary, fills our heart with compassion for the other party, and if we are as ready as ever to welcome more such experience, we shall have realized the true aim of our life. If anybody abused St. Francis, he would smile gently and thank God that he did not inspire that person to assault him, and if anybody assaulted him he would thank God that He did not inspire the latter to kill him outright. If anybody attempted to kill him, St. Francis would say that after all he did not try to torture him. The point is that he who has overcome love for his body and looks upon it only as an instrument will never be affected in his mind by anybody injuring his body.”

Blessings from Bapu


CWMG-Vol.-49-page-22.

I Have Planted My Word in Your Heart

There is a story from the life of St. Francis of Assisi, in Italy. An old, nearly blind beggar woman asked him for alms. She couldn’t see that he was dressed as poorly as she, and was not likely to have anything to give her. It distressed him, however, that he had nothing to give her. And then he realized that he still had one thing in his possession: His well-thumbed copy of the Holy Bible. This he gave to her, in the hope that she might be able to sell it for a few coins.

He then prayed almost apologetically, “Lord, in helping this poor old woman I have even given away Your word!”
A voice within him replied, “Francis, I have planted my word in your heart. You have no need for that merely printed copy of it.”

Swami Kriyananda