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**Francis of Assisi II**

**Lead: Born into a prosperous commercial family Francesco di Pietro di Bernardone, Francis of Assisi, in 1208 answered a spiritual call to a life of poverty and service. His movement brought repentance and reform to a church in deep need of renewal.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Struggling to maintain its authority the face of a growing challenge from newly emerging nation states, the Roman Catholic Church was focused on institutional**

survival. Many ordinary believers, however, were convinced the Church had lost its way and were turning elsewhere for spiritual solace. Into such an environment came Francesco di Bernardone. A popular youth, he was raised in the central Italian town of Assisi, north of Rome in the Umbrian hills. In 1208 he had a spiritual crisis which, in turn, drew him into a life of pious service. Francis was a layman, whose spiritual journey included preaching and a life of consistent imitation of Christ. He celebrated poverty and stripped himself of all possessions and worldly encumbrances; he never insisted that personal poverty was the Christian ideal, but invited his followers to such a lifestyle. He considered that all

**nature reflected the divine and called all creatures his brothers and sisters.**

**Such a consistent lifestyle was instantly appealing and the three orders he founded, the Friars, the Poor Clares for women, and a lay support structure, the Brothers and Sisters of Penance grew in popularity and influence. Francis attempted several mission trips to bring the Gospel to Islam and gradually turned over the administration of the order to others. He died in 1226 having by a life of consistent service brought renewal and life to the Church.**

**Research assistance by Ana Whitt, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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