

Simplicity, serenity and sincerity. I would like to consider these three virtues in thinking about our dear pets and thinking about the life and ministry of St. Francis.

Francis lived before the Renaissance – around 1200. He was born to a wealthy family in Assisi. His father wanted him to follow him into the family line of business. **Francis wanted a life of simplicity, not the merchant's life of deal-making.** Francis lived the high life in his youth but did not want to settle down to what his father expected from him. A well to do son should either go into business, into the military or into the priesthood. Francis hated the idea of following in his father's business footsteps. He tried life in the military, but he didn't last long. He became very disillusioned with a life of war. **Francis wanted a life of serenity, not a life of constant strife and fighting.**

A strange vision made him return to Assisi, deepening his ecclesiastical awakening.^[2] On a [pilgrimage](#) to Rome, he joined the poor in begging at [St. Peter's Basilica](#),^[9] an experience that moved him to live in poverty.^[9] Francis returned home, began preaching on the streets, and soon gathered followers.ⁱ His experiences living and caring for the poor convinced him to live an intentionally holy life, not as a priest, but as a follower of Jesus, working with the poor.

The Church was not at a height of spirituality at that time. Francis lived during the fourth and fifth Crusades, both of which failed miserably. Those Crusades were not such glorious times for the Christian Church. Europeans sent armies with the Cross of Christ leading the way, and mowing down anyone who was not a loyal Christian.

He also lived at the time of the Spanish Inquisition...also not a particularly high point in Church history. Spanish priests sought to find and to “question” all those who were not professed and baptized Christians. Francis realized that if one **really** wanted to pursue a spiritual life, one had to become a monk. **Francis wanted a life of sincerity, a life devoted to Christ.**

And there it was; simplicity, serenity, sincerity. Francis saw that God meant for nature and humanity to live together, and be blessed together. God's goodness blesses both people and animals. God's humility meant that Jesus came to earth for us, and for all of creation, and humbly became a beggar. So, Francis too, wanted to follow Jesus and live a simple serene and sincere life.

I think that Keen, my dog, lives a life much more about Simplicity, Serenity and Sincerity than I do. Yes, he gets himself into lots of trouble (rolling in dead things, eating my upholstery) but he does it sincerely!

What a wonderful parallel. God loves us as we love God's creation. Keep filling us with love and care for all your people and creatures, Lord Christ.

ⁱ Wikipedia.org, Francis of Assisi.