SAINTS, SCRIPTURE & SACRED CREATURES



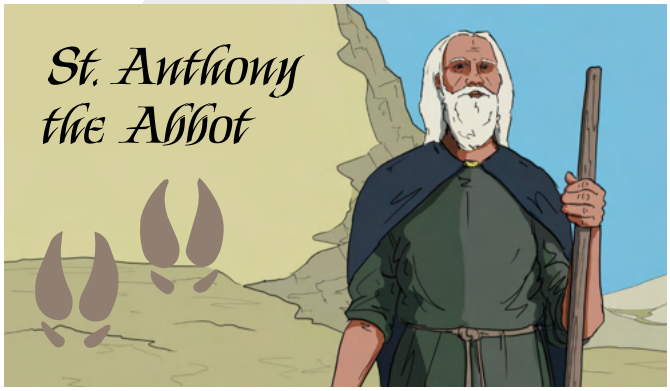
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!
Psalm 150:6.

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

Saints, Scripture and Sacred Creatures

Many Christian saints shared deep bonds with animals, birds and marine life, reflecting Biblical themes of creation care and ecological harmony. While several of these creatures were considered unclean in the Hebrew Scriptures, these saints were either aided or saved by them. So throughout the year, let us celebrate eight of these Saints, their relationship with these remarkable creatures and some inspirational Scripture along the way.















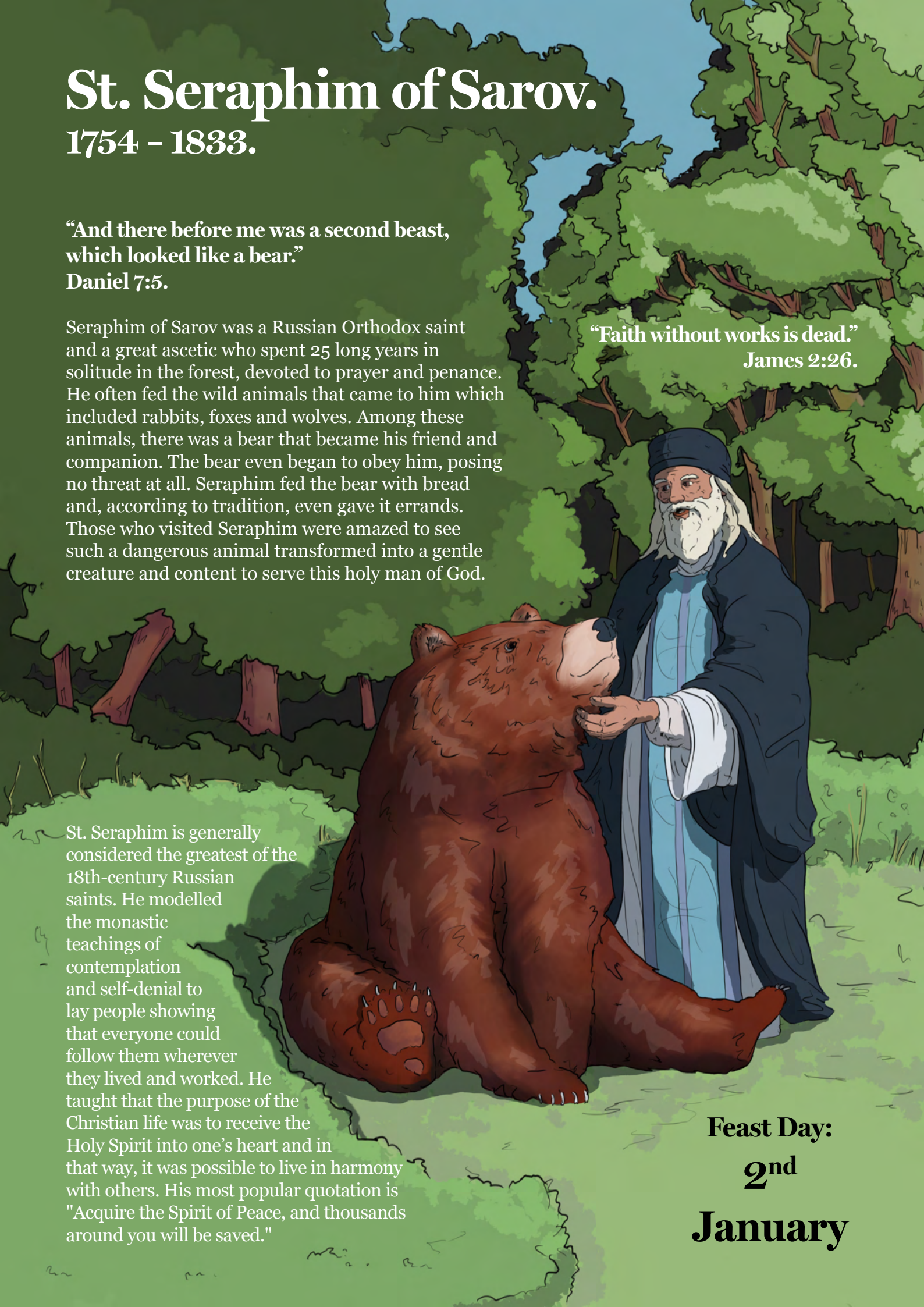


St. Seraphim of Sarov.
1754 - 1833.

“And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear.”
Daniel 7:5.

Seraphim of Sarov was a Russian Orthodox saint and a great ascetic who spent 25 long years in solitude in the forest, devoted to prayer and penance. He often fed the wild animals that came to him which included rabbits, foxes and wolves. Among these animals, there was a bear that became his friend and companion. The bear even began to obey him, posing no threat at all. Seraphim fed the bear with bread and, according to tradition, even gave it errands. Those who visited Seraphim were amazed to see such a dangerous animal transformed into a gentle creature and content to serve this holy man of God.

“Faith without works is dead.”
James 2:26.



St. Seraphim is generally considered the greatest of the 18th-century Russian saints. He modelled the monastic teachings of contemplation and self-denial to lay people showing that everyone could follow them wherever they lived and worked. He taught that the purpose of the Christian life was to receive the Holy Spirit into one’s heart and in that way, it was possible to live in harmony with others. His most popular quotation is "Acquire the Spirit of Peace, and thousands around you will be saved."

Feast Day:
2nd
January

"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."
Luke 6:36.



St. Anthony the Abbot.

251-356.

"God made the wild animals according to their kinds..."
Genesis 1:25.

"... Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness..."
Ephesians 6:10-12

St. Anthony (also known as 'the Great') was a monk from Egypt, revered since his death as a saint. He was among the first pioneer monks to go into the wilderness around AD 270. He gave away all his wealth, including 300 acres of inherited land to the poor after hearing the Gospel. He chose to live a radical life of solitude, prayer and fasting in the Egyptian desert. Here, Anthony memorised vast portions of the Bible and used the Scriptures as a weapon against spiritual trials, isolation and temptations.



While praying in his hermitage one day, Anthony met a wild mother boar with blind piglets. Seeing she was in such distress and needing help, he was moved with compassion. So he healed the blind piglets, and the mother boar was so grateful for the miracle that she became his faithful guardian, never leaving his side. St. Athanasius wrote the Life of Anthony showing him as a model of virtue and spiritual combat, the pattern for all monks.

Feast Day:
17th January



"Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."
Matthew 6:34.

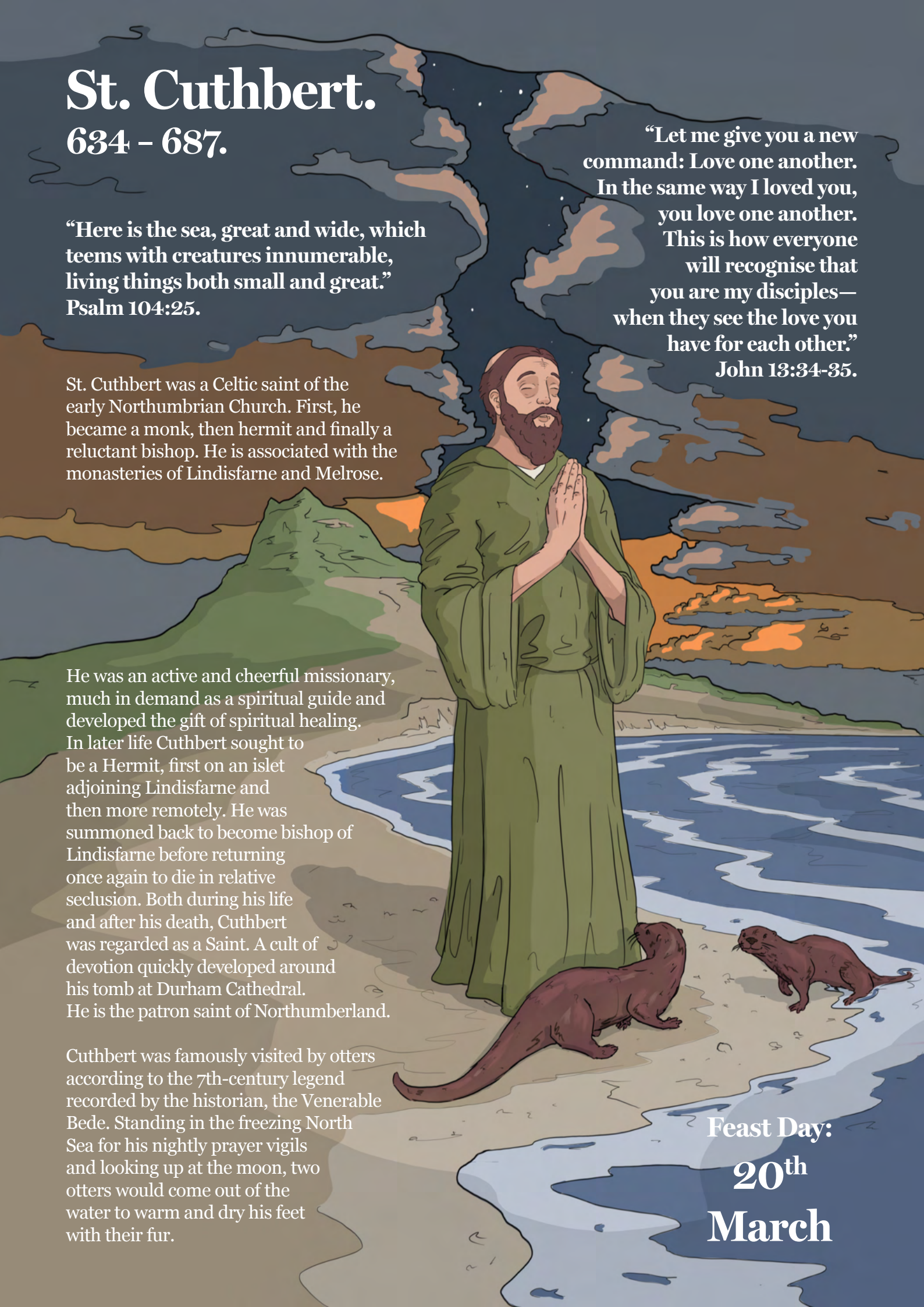


St. Cuthbert.
634 - 687.

"Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great." Psalm 104:25.

"Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognise that you are my disciples— when they see the love you have for each other." John 13:34-35.

St. Cuthbert was a Celtic saint of the early Northumbrian Church. First, he became a monk, then hermit and finally a reluctant bishop. He is associated with the monasteries of Lindisfarne and Melrose.



He was an active and cheerful missionary, much in demand as a spiritual guide and developed the gift of spiritual healing. In later life Cuthbert sought to be a Hermit, first on an islet adjoining Lindisfarne and then more remotely. He was summoned back to become bishop of Lindisfarne before returning once again to die in relative seclusion. Both during his life and after his death, Cuthbert was regarded as a Saint. A cult of devotion quickly developed around his tomb at Durham Cathedral. He is the patron saint of Northumberland.

Cuthbert was famously visited by otters according to the 7th-century legend recorded by the historian, the Venerable Bede. Standing in the freezing North Sea for his nightly prayer vigils and looking up at the moon, two otters would come out of the water to warm and dry his feet with their fur.

Feast Day:
20th March

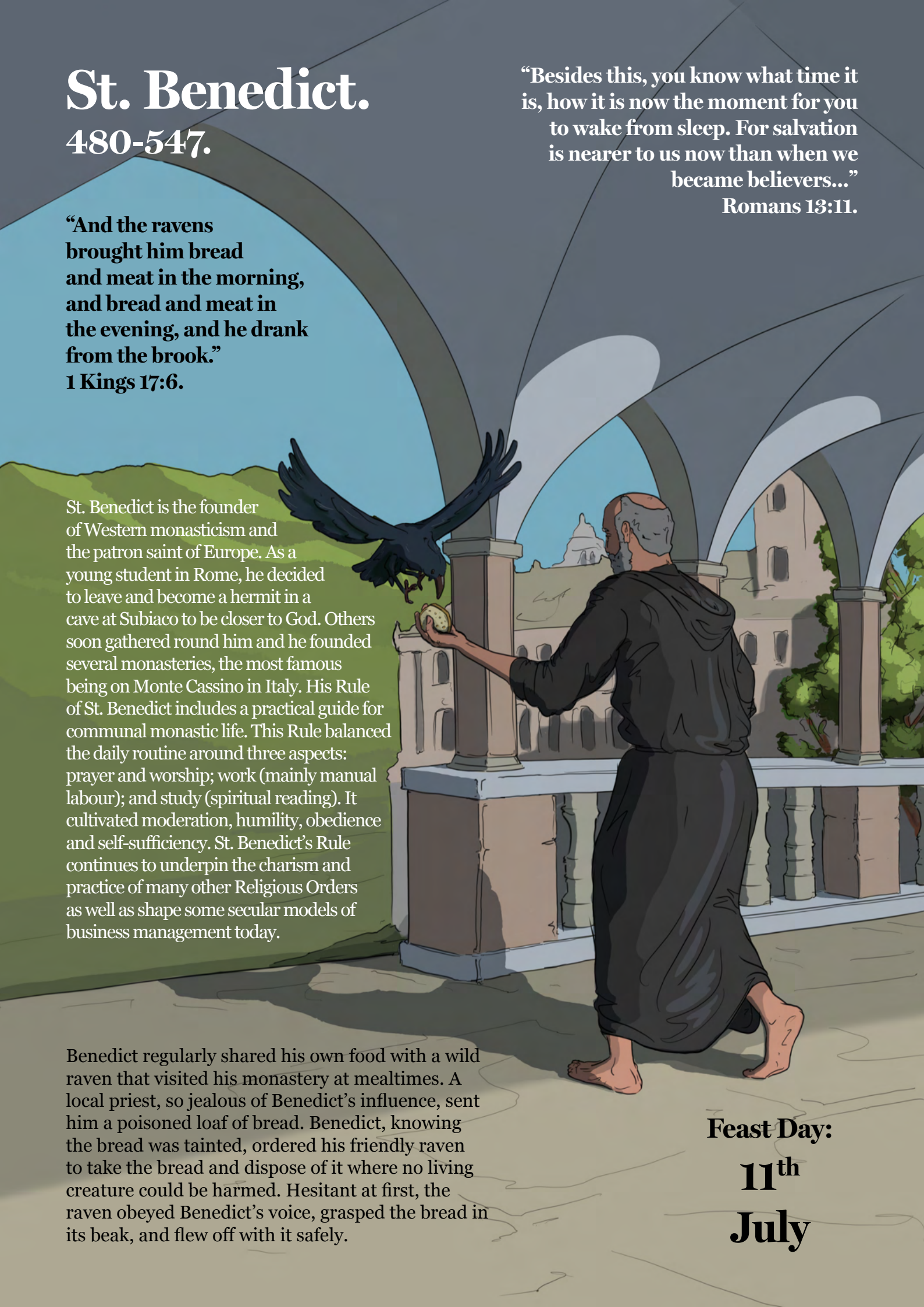
“I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.”
Psalm 121:1-2.



St. Benedict.
480-547.

"Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers..."
Romans 13:11.

"And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook."
1 Kings 17:6.



St. Benedict is the founder of Western monasticism and the patron saint of Europe. As a young student in Rome, he decided to leave and become a hermit in a cave at Subiaco to be closer to God. Others soon gathered round him and he founded several monasteries, the most famous being on Monte Cassino in Italy. His Rule of St. Benedict includes a practical guide for communal monastic life. This Rule balanced the daily routine around three aspects: prayer and worship; work (mainly manual labour); and study (spiritual reading). It cultivated moderation, humility, obedience and self-sufficiency. St. Benedict's Rule continues to underpin the charism and practice of many other Religious Orders as well as shape some secular models of business management today.

Benedict regularly shared his own food with a wild raven that visited his monastery at mealtimes. A local priest, so jealous of Benedict's influence, sent him a poisoned loaf of bread. Benedict, knowing the bread was tainted, ordered his friendly raven to take the bread and dispose of it where no living creature could be harmed. Hesitant at first, the raven obeyed Benedict's voice, grasped the bread in its beak, and flew off with it safely.

Feast Day:
11th July





“My child,
be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.”
Proverbs 4:20.



St. Roch.

c.1295-1327

(exact dates unknown).

"Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"
Luke 10:8-9.

"But whoever is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion."
Ecclesiastes 9:4.

St. Roch was miraculously marked from birth with a red cross on his breast. Early in his life he showed great devotion and ascetism. When he was 20 his parents died and he gave all their wealth to the poor, entered the Franciscan Third Order and went on pilgrimage to Rome where the plague was rife. He cared for plague victims in Italy and France, curing many with the Sign of the Cross. After catching the disease himself, he withdrew to a cave so as not to be a burden. Here a dog brought him bread every day from its master's table and licked his sores clean until its owner discovered the saint and took him home.



Once recovered, Roch returned to helping the sick. He showed people the plague scar on his thigh believing it was divinely sent to imitate Christ's sufferings. Unjustly accused of being a spy he died in prison. However, the red cross on his breast revealed his identity and holiness. Roch's tomb became a place of miracles. He was invoked throughout Europe as the patron saint of plague sufferers and is always pictured with his faithful dog.

Feast Day:
6th August

"Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys."
Luke 12:33.



St. Francis of Assisi.
1181-1226.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God..." Matthew 5:9.

"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." Mark 16:15.

St. Francis of Assisi preached to the birds as his brothers and sisters and not as property or resources to exploit and eat. He taught that we have a sacred duty to respect the natural world. He moved worms off paths to prevent them being crushed by people and he released trapped rabbits and fish back into the wild where they belonged. In 1225 just before he died, St. Francis composed a Canticle praising God's Creation as: Brother Sun, Sister Moon and Stars, Mother Earth, Brother Fire, Sister Water, Brother Wind and Sister Death. It is the earliest surviving work of Italian literature with a known author; it celebrates our interconnection with creation and embraces death as a peaceful transition to God.



The Legend of St. Francis and the Wolf tells of a wolf terrorising the Italian town of Gubbio, eating sheep, cattle and attacking people.

The townspeople planned to kill it. St. Francis, out of compassion and trust in God, met the wolf with respect. He made the Sign of the Cross, commanded the wolf in the name of Christ not to harm anyone and the wolf lay at his feet. St. Francis made a pact: the people would feed the wolf daily and it would stop attacking the town. The wolf placed its paw in Francis' hand and lived peacefully in Gubbio for two years.

Feast Day:
4th
October

"But I say to you that listen,
'Love your enemies,
do good to those who hate you,
bless those who curse you, pray
for those who abuse you.'"
Luke 6:27-28.

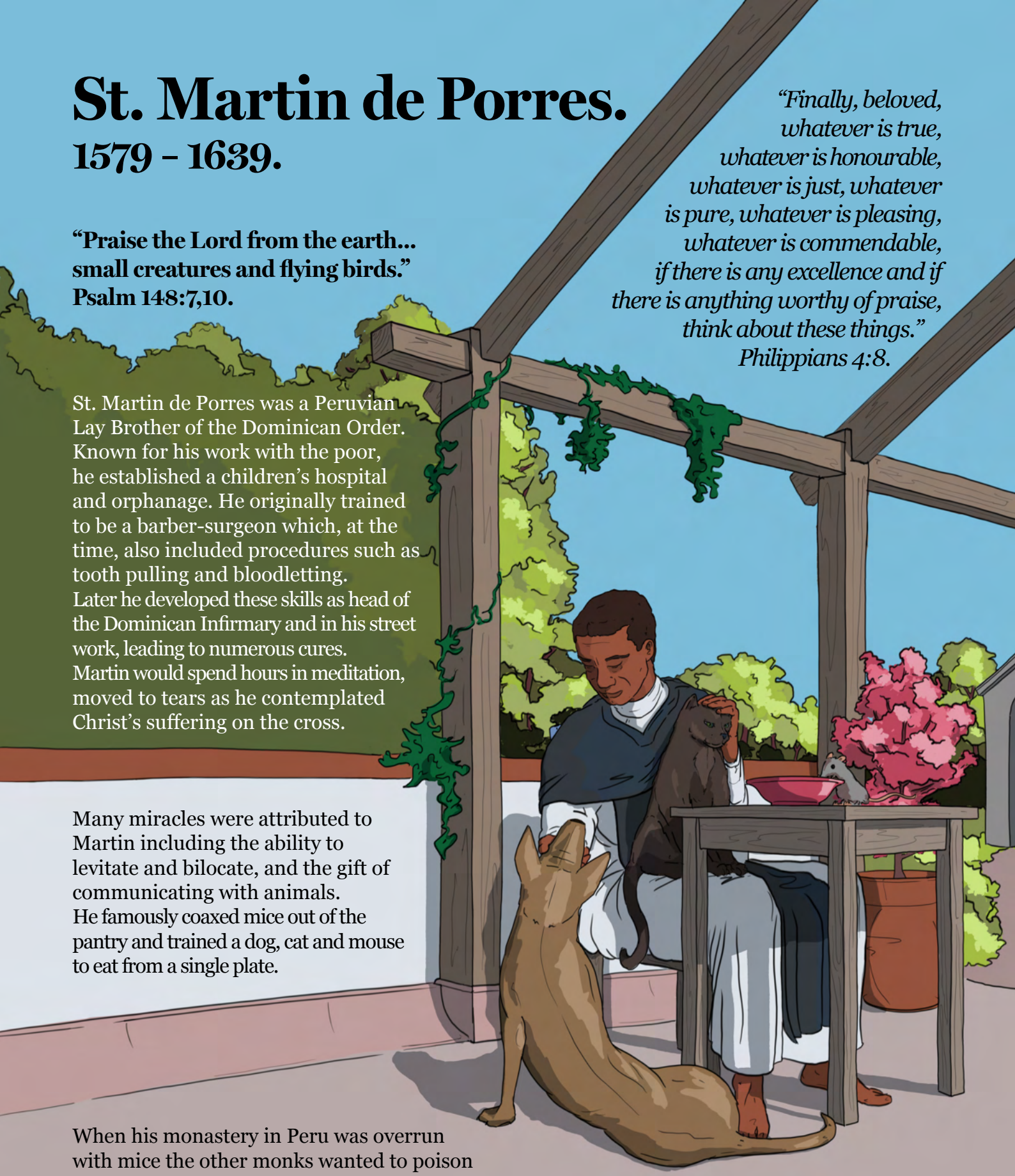


St. Martin de Porres.
1579 – 1639.

"Praise the Lord from the earth... small creatures and flying birds." Psalm 148:7,10.

"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Philippians 4:8.

St. Martin de Porres was a Peruvian Lay Brother of the Dominican Order. Known for his work with the poor, he established a children's hospital and orphanage. He originally trained to be a barber-surgeon which, at the time, also included procedures such as tooth pulling and bloodletting. Later he developed these skills as head of the Dominican Infirmary and in his street work, leading to numerous cures. Martin would spend hours in meditation, moved to tears as he contemplated Christ's suffering on the cross.



Many miracles were attributed to Martin including the ability to levitate and bilocate, and the gift of communicating with animals. He famously coaxed mice out of the pantry and trained a dog, cat and mouse to eat from a single plate.

When his monastery in Peru was overrun with mice the other monks wanted to poison them. Martin refused to kill them, instead he made an agreement with the mice that if they stayed outside the monastery, he would feed them at the garden door. The mice obeyed and left. Throughout his life, Martin modelled radical inclusion - he treated animals, wealthy nobles, enslaved peoples and the indigenous poor with equal love and dignity.

Feast Day:
3rd
November

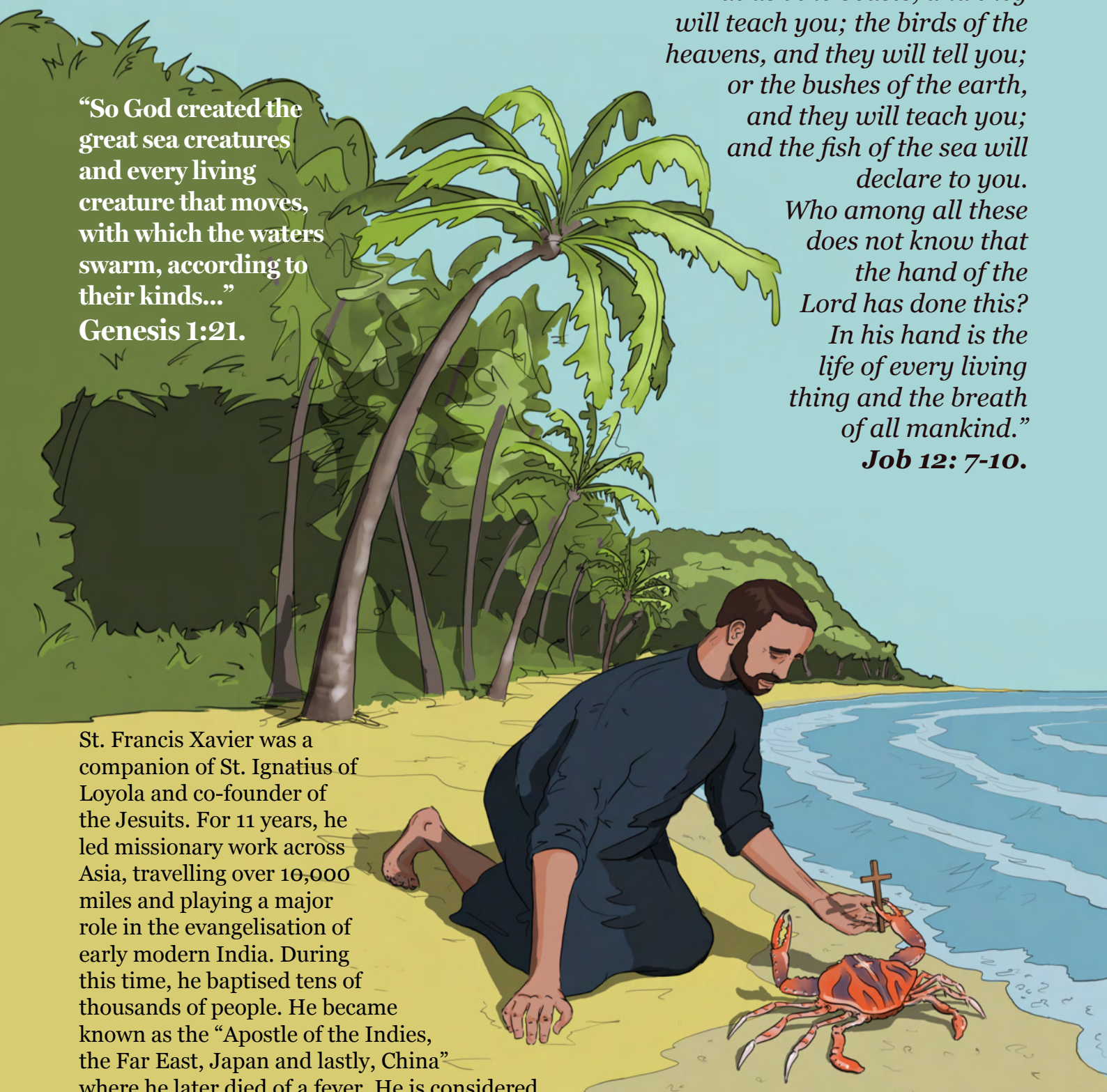
"Come to me, all you that are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.
...for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls."
Matthew 11:28-29.



St. Francis Xavier.
1506-1552.

"So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds..."
Genesis 1:21.

"But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind."
Job 12: 7-10.



St. Francis Xavier was a companion of St. Ignatius of Loyola and co-founder of the Jesuits. For 11 years, he led missionary work across Asia, travelling over 10,000 miles and playing a major role in the evangelisation of early modern India. During this time, he baptised tens of thousands of people. He became known as the "Apostle of the Indies, the Far East, Japan and lastly, China" where he later died of a fever. He is considered one of the greatest missionaries since St. Paul.
In 1546, according to tradition, Francis, while travelling to Indonesia was caught in a storm and his crucifix fell into the sea. As soon as he safely reached the island, he saw a crab emerge from the sea holding his crucifix in its claws. The crab carried it to Francis and gave it to him. Francis knelt on the shore and thanked God for this miracle.

Feast Day:
3rd
December

"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"
Mark 8:36.



Going Deeper:
Recommended Resources

Adults

The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints *by Jacobus de Voragine.*

The Lives of the Saints for Orthodox Christians *by Dean Marais. (3rd edition).*

The Book of Saints: A History of Saints from the Time of Christ to the Present Day *by Jo Rose.*

Angels and Saints: A Biblical Guide to Friendship with God's Holy Ones *by Scott Hahn.*

Saints: A Visual Guide *by Edward and Lorna Mornin.*

Saints, Signs, and Symbols: The Symbolic Language of Christian Art *by James Cornwell.*

https://catholicism.org/category/lives-of-the-saints

https://mycatholic.life/saints/



Children

Saints' Lives: The Miraculous, Inspiring, and Astonishing Stories of the Saints
by Tina Beattie (author) and Alicia Rutigliano (illustrator).

A Saint a Day: A 365-Day Devotional Featuring Christian Saints
by Meredith Hinds (author) and Isabel Munoz (illustrator).

The Complete Guide to Catholic Saints for Kids:
A 30-Day Journey to Build Faith, Courage, and Character Through Simple Daily Actions
by Percy Schmidt.



Design & Illustration
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