



## Kid's Corner: St. Francis and the Wolf

In October, we celebrate the life of St. Francis, a holy man who lived in Italy a long, long time ago. Francis grew up in a rich family, but when he got to know Jesus, he learned that a lot of things are more important than money. He decided to live a simple, holy life as a poor man who loved God and helped people. Francis also loved all the animals because God had made them. He knew that even the scary animals, like lions, wolves, and bears were important to God, so they were important to Francis too. Sometimes, Francis even talked with the animals like they were his friends.

One time, Francis came to a town called Gubbio. The people in Gubbio had a big problem. A mean, hungry wolf was eating their sheep and their chickens. He had even killed a few people! Everyone was scared. The farmers worried about their animals. The parents worried about their children. Nobody went outside anymore. Even the hunters were too scared to go after the wolf. Only Francis wasn't scared. "Somebody needs to help these people," he thought. "I'm going to talk to this wolf."

The people of Gubbio were really excited that Francis wanted to help them. They offered him their best hunting weapons and sturdy shields to protect himself, but Francis wouldn't take them. "This wolf is not my enemy," he said softly. "I don't want to hurt him. And God will protect me better than any shield could." So a woman led Francis to the cave where the wolf lived, and Francis went inside.

At first, Wolf was very angry that Francis had disturbed his peace. "Who is this smelly weirdo?" he thought to himself as he growled at Francis. "He didn't even knock! Maybe I should make him my mid-morning snack." But as he crept toward Francis, getting ready to pounce, the holy man suddenly started talking to him. The wolf was surprised how gentle his voice sounded. "Dear Wolf," Francis said, "I know I look tasty, but if you eat me, you'll only get hungry again. Wouldn't it be better if you had food that lasted for the rest of your life?" This sounded interesting. The wolf sat down and perked up his ears.

When Francis saw that he had the wolf's attention, he kept talking. "I'm here to tell you about the people of Gubbio," he said. "They're very nice folks, really. But if you eat all of their sheep, they will be hungry, and hungry people get cranky —just like hungry wolves. And think about the children. Everyone is so scared of you that they can't play outside anymore. Being inside all the time is really boring!" Wolf kept listening. He wanted the people of Gubbio to have food and for the children to play outside, but he also needed to eat. What was he supposed to do? Francis thought about this problem, too. Then he had an idea. "Hey Wolf!" he said, "God gave you so many gifts, you don't need to be a villain. You're so strong and scary, you would make a great protector for the village! If the people of Gubbio promise to feed you, will you promise to guard the village and keep them safe?" Wolf agreed.

When the people of Gubbio heard about this plan, they thought Francis was nuts. Could this mean, scary creature really be their protector? But when they saw how gentle Wolf and Francis were with each other, they started to warm up to the idea. Wolf had changed, and they were ready to change too. They fed Wolf breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and in exchange, Wolf made sure that all the children in the village were safe. Wolf began to love the villagers, and the villagers loved the wolf. And Wolf was never hungry again for the rest of his life.

### **What do you think?**

Why were the people of Gubbio scared?

Why do you think Francis wasn't scared of the wolf?

Do you have any animals that you love? Draw them next to St. Francis. You can pray to St. Francis for them.