

St Francis of Assisi Window

Who?

This beautiful stained glass window shows St Francis of Assisi. St Francis came from a rich family, but as a young man, he decided to turn his back on his wealthy life of luxury and chose to live in poverty instead and devote his life to helping people. His sincere way of life and humanitarian message attracted followers, and he set up a community of people who wanted to live like him and spend their lives doing the same work that he did. St Francis is one of the most venerated saints in the Christian church.

Where?

St Francis came from the town of Assisi, in northern Italy. Francis is the English version of his original Italian name, which was Francesco.

When?

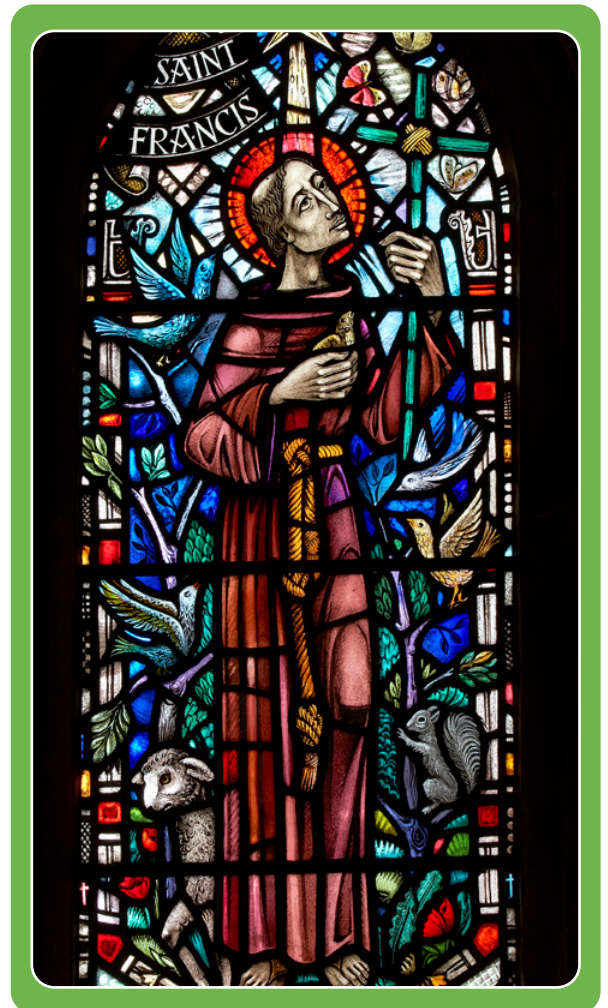
St Francis was born in either 1181 or 1182, and he died in 1226. He was canonised (made a saint) in 1228. In 1979 Pope John Paul II declared him to be the patron saint of ecology, which means living things and their natural environment. His feast day is celebrated each year on 4 October. It is quite common on this day for people to take their pets to church to be blessed.

Why?

He is the patron saint of ecology because of two very famous legends about St Francis. One is, that he once was with some friends in the countryside and he stopped to tell his Christian message to the wild birds. They did not fly away from him, as you would expect, but stayed next to him, listening to his voice and his words as he spoke.

Another is that a village was being terrorised by a wolf that was living nearby in the mountains. St Francis sought the wolf out, talked to it and persuaded it not to harm the villagers. The wolf walked back to the village with him and promised the villagers it would leave them alone from then on.

When he is depicted in art he is often shown with many animals, and especially holding a bird in his hand – as he is here in this window.



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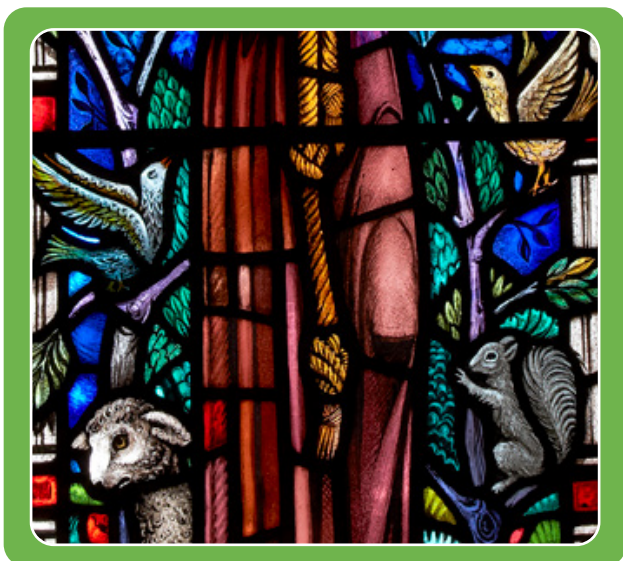
The window – what and how?

The window is a **stained glass window**. It was made by assembling many small flat pieces of stained glass and holding them together with strips of **lead** within a lead frame.

The glass was stained with a mixture of two techniques. The first technique was to mix in **metallic salts** with the glass when it was created to make plain pieces of one solid colour.

The second technique was for adding more detail. Colours were **painted** on to the glass pieces with a brush and then **fused** to the surface by heating them in a **kiln**. Examples of this are the detail of wool on the lamb and fur on the squirrel.

Making a stained glass window requires a lot of **skill**. The window has to be able to stand up and not fall apart, and be weatherproof. This requires an understanding of **structure** and **materials**. It has to have beautiful **design**. This requires **artistry**. Lastly, if the window tells a story or shows a character from a story, this has to be clear to the person looking at it. This requires skill in visual **storytelling**.



Who, when and why?

The window is not part of the original 15th century build. It is in the **baptistry**, which was a 19th century extension to the main Chapel. The baptistry holds the baptismal **font** and is where christenings take place. The window itself is relatively recent. It was created in 1970 by the artist Carrick Whalen.

The window was commissioned by the 6th Earl of Rosslyn and is dedicated to his mother, Princess Dimitri. The window shows St Francis because, like him, Princess Dimitri was a great lover of animals. Most of the animals and wildlife shown in the window can be found in Scotland but if you look closely you can also spot a kangaroo or wallaby! This is because Princess Dimitri was born and grew up in Australia.

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