St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis of Assisi was born in Italy circa 1181. During a serious illness, he converted to Christianity after a vision of Jesus. He literally followed the example of Jesus. He begged for sustenance and preached about peace and purity. He helped the sick, visited hospitals and treated all people as his siblings. After beginning to attract followers in 1209, he received a papal blessing and founded the Franciscans. Clare of Assisi became his spiritual student in 1212, after which the Poor Clares were founded. St. Francis lived with animals, and composed songs to God. He received stigmata circa 1224 and died Oct. 4, 1226. St. Francis of Assisi is patron saint of animals, ecology and peace.