

The touch of St. Francis

Was it a coincidence that our canonization pilgrimage arrived in Assisi April 22, Earth Day? That aspect of the spirit of St. Francis, the patron saint of the environment, is palpable in the town he made famous, from the pristine streets in Assisi to the songbirds that provide an early wake-up call.

When I was a frequent business traveler for a daily newspaper, no second thought was given to taking a towel off the rack in an airport Marriott, using it once and then throwing it on the ground. All of us have become more environmentally conscious, and in Assisi, you can't help but practice the same stewardship that is customary at home, so it was that no new linens were required when the maids hit my room there.



St. Francis of Assisi statue in Assisi, Italy

I took the accompanying photo at St. Mary of the Angels ("Santa Maria degli Angeli"), the cathedral that was built around the site of his death in 1226. As the story goes, some Franciscan nuns opened a window near the Rose Garden and two white doves came in to nest near a statue of St. Francis. The touch St. Francis had with nature is still evident.

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