

Italian Holidays – Feast of St. Francis

1. Name of the holiday in English

Feast of Saint Francis

1. Name of the Holiday in Italian

Festa Di San Francesco D'Assisi Patrono D'Italia

2. Date in English

October 4

2. Date in Italian

3 e 4 ottobre

3. A brief history of the holiday: What are the origins of this holiday in Italy? Why is it celebrated in Italy? What does it commemorate? What famous people are connected to this holiday?

Saint Francis of Assisi was born in Umbria in 1118, and is the patron saint of animals, nature, and birds. Saint Francis is largely celebrated as the saint that married “Lady Poverty”, as he renounced wealth and fortune in life. He dedicated his life to living as Christ had, helping others, and without worldly possessions. Saint Francis based his lifestyle on Matthew 10:7, 9-11 which states “Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.” He is regarded as one of the most important saints, as he influenced the church in many aspects, such as building covenants, schools, hospitals, houses for the homeless, and orphanages. He is also restored the church of San Damiano and is considered the first Italian poet by some critics. The Feast of St Francis celebrates his transition to heaven, and reflection of his legacy.

St. Francis is also credited for creating the live Christmas nativity scene, in the hopes of leaving an impact on those in attendance. He wanted to showcase the contrast of the material of his day, to the humble beginnings of Jesus Christ. The onlookers were instantly fascinated and enthralled by Saint Francis’s passionate words and incredible nativity. The live nativity scene is a continued tradition in most facets of Christianity today and seen all over the world today.

4. Is it more of a regional holiday or is it celebrated all over Italy?

This is a national holiday, however, the center of the celebration in Italy is in Assisi, the place of Saint Francis’s birth. Beginning on October 3rd, Assisi is illuminated by oil lamps brought from a different Italian town each year. Religious services are held in the Basilica of St Francis and in the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli.

5. How is this holiday celebrated in Italy? Is it celebrated differently in different regions?

While Italy celebrates this solemn holiday publicly, it is celebrated/observed privately, in most other countries.

6. Are there any special customs connected with the celebration of this holiday in Italy?

Some people bring their pets to be blessed during the Feast of Saint Francis, as he often expressed his love for animals.

7. Are there any special foods/meals connected with this holiday?

It is thought that Saint Francis's favorite food was mostaccioli, traditionally dry biscuits with almonds and honey.

8. Are there any specific recipes you can share of foods prepared for this holiday?

This is a Catholic religious holiday, and my family is protestant, so unfortunately I did not celebrate. However, I will link a recipe for mostaccioli below.

9. Are there special greetings Italians say to each other on this holiday? Any special Italian vocabulary connected with this holiday?

No special phrases, but we do wish **Buon Onomastico** to all named Francesco, Francesca, Francine, Franco.

10. Did your family immigrant ancestors celebrate this holiday? Does your family still celebrate it with Italian traditions?

This is a Catholic religious holiday, and my family is protestant, so unfortunately I have nothing to add.

11. Add any other information you consider pertinent or interesting.

The Tau Cross is a symbol for Saint Francis. It represented turning away from sin, and to Christ the savior instead.

12. List as many ideas as possible on how we can incorporate these holiday celebrations at our lodges to foster interest in Italian culture, heritage, and language. Think of activities that would appeal to different age levels (children, young adults, other embers, families, specific interest groups).

- I think for this holiday it would be a good representation of St. Francis to collectively volunteer at soup kitchens, collect food for a food drive, collect socks and scarves in the wintertime.
- I also think having a cooking demo, where the mostaccioli were baked, would be fantastic for children and adults alike. We could even incorporate language, by learning the names of the ingredients. Here is a link to the recipe <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/recipes/view.cfm?id=2>
- We could also make Tau crosses to wear or donate to Catholic nursing homes.
- It would also be worth looking into imitating the events occurring in Assisi during the Saint Francis holiday. Instead of oil lamps, perhaps a local lodge, or state lodge, could host a candlelight ceremony for those interested. There would of course be food afterward, but it should be very simple, plain food, to reflect the life of Saint Francis.
- I also think having a "story time" for young children and their parents to attend would be beneficial. Not every adult knows the life story of Saint Francis, and his life would be a good testament for the children.
- Also, as Saint Francis preferred the simple life, a day hiking, or camping could be intriguing to young adults. It could become a competition between groups: who can complete basic life skills (such as starting a fire or catching a fish) the quickest. There could also be specific animals that must be spotted, with pictures/ descriptions printed on a bingo board.

- Learn some of the prayers of St. Francis in English and Italian: Prayer for Peace, Canticle of the Creatures, Prayer Before the Blessed Sacrament, Prayer Before the Crucifix, Prayer Given to Brother Leo, Praises of God and the Blessing, We Adore You
- Have a slide show about the town of Assisi, the Basilica of St Francis, the art in the Basilica (Giotto, Cimabue), his tomb, Portiuncula Chapel etc. to learn about his life and how he was portrayed in art.