

St. Francis of Assisi (1181 – 1226) was the child of a wealthy Italian family who founded the Franciscan order of monks. He wrote the *Canticle of Brother Sun* that is reproduced on the other side of this sheet. For this assignment give a close reading of this text. Explain how it makes sense as a Christian prayer. Be specific about how the elements of nature that are singled out for praise (sun, moon, stars, wind, fire, earth, etc.) reflect Christian beliefs about the world and God's role in creating the world. How does singling out these aspects of nature help Christians in their lives? What kind of attitude towards nature does the text suggest is the best one for a Christian to take? What kind of moral lessons can be derived from this praise of the natural world? How does enacting praise of creation in this way assist one in being a better Christian, in your opinion?

2 pages, typed and double-spaced. Due Wednesday February 22nd.

THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,

Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all blessing,¹
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,

and no human is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,

especially Sir Brother Sun,

Who is the day and through whom You give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;

and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,²

in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,

and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather,

through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,³

who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,⁴

through whom You light the night,⁵

and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,⁶

who sustains and governs us,

and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.⁷

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love,

and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace

for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,

from whom no one living can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.

Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,

for the second death shall do them no harm.⁸

Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks⁹
and serve Him with great humility.

From Francis of Assisi, *Early Documents*, vol. 1: *The Saints*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Helman, and William J. Short. The translation's verse numbers and Bible citations have been omitted. Italicized type corresponding to the citations has been made roman.

1. See Revelation 4:9, 11.

2. See Psalms 148:3. "Through": Here, Francis used the Italian preposition *per*, which could also mean "for." Thus, the line could be giving thanks "for Sister Moon and the stars." Some translators use "through" to reflect the biblical

idea that all creation praises God.

3. See Psalms 148:4.

4. See the Song of the Three Young Men, verse 44.

5. See Psalms 78:14.

6. See Daniel 3:74.

7. See Psalms 104:13–14.

8. See Revelation 2:11, 20:6.

9. See Daniel 3:85.