

Three years before he died, St. Francis decided to celebrate the memory of the birth of the Child Jesus at Greccio. He had a crib prepared, with hay and an ox and an ass. The friars were all invited and the people came in crowds. The forest re-echoed with their voices and the night was lit up with hundreds of torches. St. Francis stood before the crib and his heart overflowed with tender compassion. Then he preached to the people about the birth of the poor King, whom he called the Babe of Bethlehem.

A knight called John of Greccio, a pious and truthful man who had abandoned his profession in the world and was a great friend of St. Francis, claimed that he saw a beautiful child asleep in the crib, and that St. Francis took it in his arms and seemed to wake it up.

The example which Francis put before the world was calculated to rouse the hearts of those who are weak in the faith, and the hay from the crib, which was kept by the people, afterwards cured sick animals and drove off various pestilences.

Peace and Joy

Olicia Benowdez