

wolf I give my word that he will faithfully observe this pact."

²⁹Then everyone gathered with a great shout promised to feed the wolf consistently. In front of them all Saint Francis said to the wolf: "And you, **Brother Wolf, do you promise to keep this pact, namely, that you will not harm any animal or person?"** The wolf, kneeling with head bowed, clearly showed to all by the gestures of its body, the wagging of its tail and ears that it would fulfill the pact as promised. Saint Francis said: "**Brother Wolf, I want you to give me your pledge on this, just as you gave me your pledge when I was outside the gate. So here before all these people give me a pledge that you will observe these things, and will not abandon me when I have given my word for you.**" Then the wolf lifted its right paw and, in front of everyone standing there, gave its pledge on the hand of Saint Francis, who had given his word.

³³And everyone's great amazement turned into rejoicing, as much out of devotion for the saint as for the novelty of

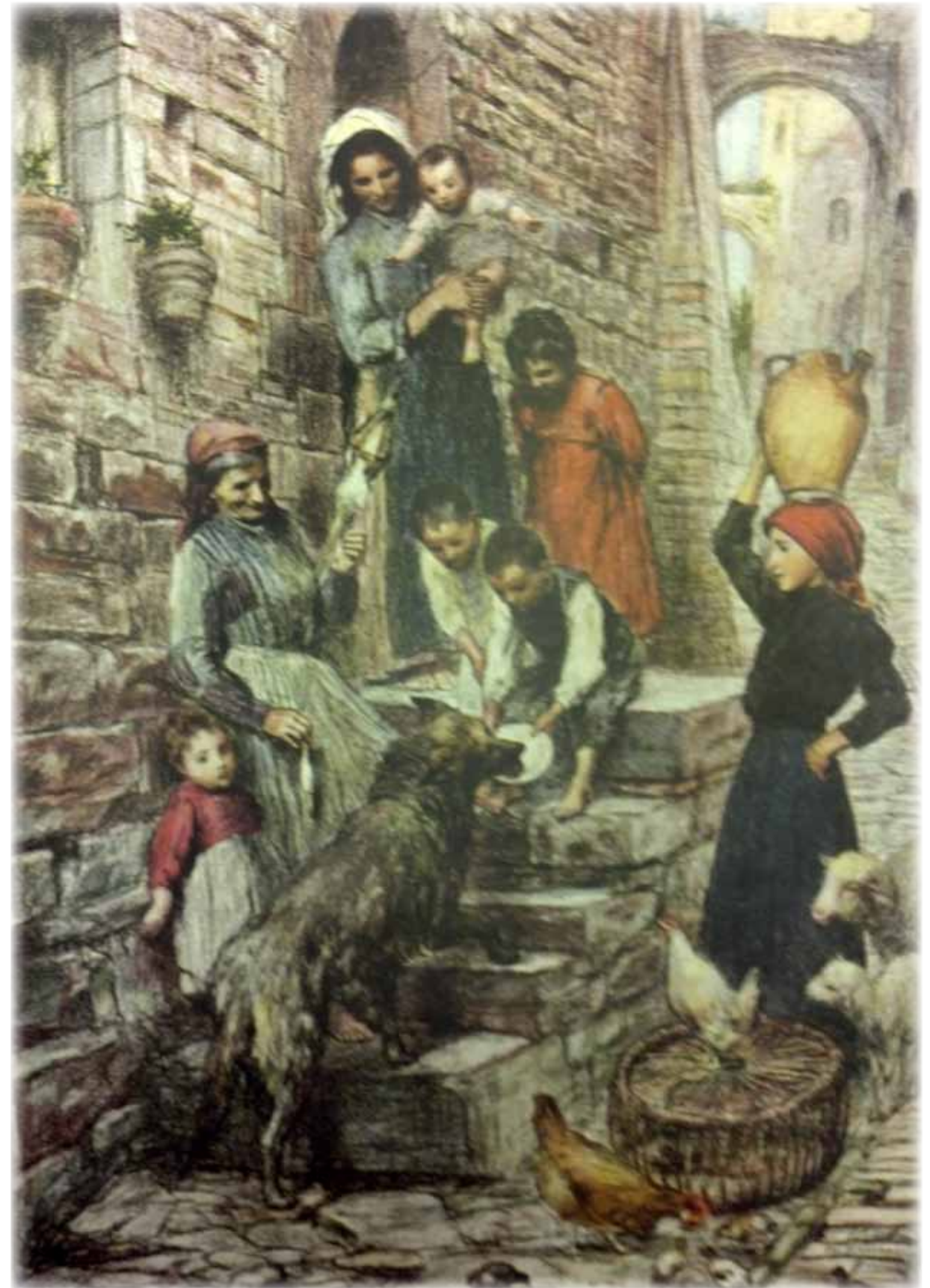
the miracle and, even more, for the peace between people and the wolf. They all shouted to the heavens, praising and blessing the Lord Jesus Christ who sent them Saint Francis, through whose merits He freed them from the jaws of the terrible beast and brought them back from such a horrible scourge to peace and quiet.

³⁵From that day they kept the pact arranged by Saint Francis: the people with the wolf and the wolf with the people. The wolf lived for two years and was courteously fed, going from door to door, harming no one and not being harmed by anyone. **And this is remarkable: no dog ever barked at the wolf.** Finally, Brother Wolf grew old and died. The citizens grieved greatly at his absence, because the peaceful and kindly patience of the wolf roaming through the city recalled to their memory the remarkable sanctity and virtue of Saint Francis.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

- a. Wolves appear in earlier stories, AC 74, 2C 35-6, and the *Passion of San Verecondo*, cf. FA:ED II 175-8, 269-70, 807. A thirteenth manuscript of Sarnano, E.70, concerning Francis's charity contains both the story of the wolf of Gubbio and the following story of the doves of Siena, leading Marino Bigaroni and Giovanni Boccali to accept the authenticity of these stories. Cf. Biagrioni, Boccali, ed., *Actus*, 58 n. 201, n. 285.



Artist: Eugene Burnand

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“Blessed Francis Leads A Wolf To Become Very Tame.” From **“The Deeds of Blessed Francis and His Companions”** (Chapter XXIII). From *From Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*. Volume III: *The Prophet*. Edited by Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M. Conv., and William J. Short, O.F.M. New York: New City Press, 2001, pp. 482-85.

¹A remarkable, noble event, worthy of remembrance, happened in the city of Gubbio while our most holy Father Saint Francis was still living. There was a wolf in the vicinity of the city of Gubbio, **terrifying in physical size and ferocious with rabid hunger.**⁴ This wolf not only destroyed other animals but even devoured men and women, keeping all the citizens in such danger and terror that when they went outside the town, **they went armed and guarded** as if they had to advance toward deadly battles. Yet, even armed, they were not able to escape the deadly teeth or the **savage fury** of that wolf when they **accidentally** met. As a result, everyone was filled with such terror that hardly anyone dared to go outside the city gate.

⁴But God wished to make known to the citizens the holiness of blessed Francis. When Saint Francis was staying there, having compassion for them, Saint Francis **decided to go out to meet that wolf**. On learning this, the citizens said to him: “Be **careful**, Brother Francis, don’t go outside the gate, because the wolf, which has already devoured many people, **will certainly** kill you.” But Saint Francis put his hope in the Lord Jesus Christ who rules the spirits of all flesh. Without the protection of a shield or helmet, but pro-

tecting himself with the sign of the holy Cross, he went out the gate **with a companion**, casting all his confidence on the Lord who makes those who believe in him tread unharmed on the basilisk and the asp, and trample not only the wolf, but even the lion and dragon. And so Francis, that most faithful soldier of Christ, steadily began taking the path that made others hesitate, not wearing chain-mail or a sword, not carrying a bow or weapons of war, but protected by the shield of holy faith and the sign of the Cross. **And while many were looking on from places where they had climbed in order to see, suddenly** that **terrifying wolf, jaws wide open**, rushed at Saint Francis. Saint Francis confronted the wolf with the sign of the Cross, restrained it by the power of God away from himself and from his companion, **stopped it in its tracks** and closed those savage gaping jaws. Finally he called the wolf to himself: “Come here, **Brother** Wolf. On behalf of Christ I order you not to harm me or anyone else.” Surprising to say, at the sign of the Cross, the wolf closed those terrifying jaws! And as soon as that command was given, the wolf **immediately bowed its head, lying down at the saint’s feet**, and already like a lamb, not a wolf. And as the wolf lay there, Saint Francis said: **“Brother** Wolf, you’ve done great dam-

age in this area, and you’ve committed horrible crimes, mercilessly destroying God’s creatures. You’ve destroyed not only irrational animals, but have dared something more detestable, killing and devouring humans made to the image of God. Therefore, you deserve to be sentenced to a horrible death like a robber or vile murderer. Everyone is crying out the complaint against you, and this whole city is your enemy. But, **Brother** Wolf, **I want to make peace between you and them**, so that they no longer will be harmed by you, and they will dismiss all your past offenses, and both men and dogs will no longer pursue you.”

¹⁴The wolf gestured with its body, tail and ears, and **bowed its head, showing that it fully accepted what the saint said**. Saint Francis then spoke again: **“Brother** Wolf, since you want to make this pact, **I promise you that as long as you live I will have your needs constantly provided for by the people of this city, so that you will never again suffer hunger, because I** know that, whatever evil you do, you do **because of the frenzy of hunger. But, my Brother** Wolf, for me to obtain this favor for you, **I want you to promise me** that you will never harm any animal or person or dare to harm anything. **Will you promise me that?”** The wolf gave a clear sign by bowing its head that it promised to do what the saint demanded. Saint Francis then said: **“Brother** Wolf, **I want you to give me a pledge so that I may confidently believe what you promise.”** **When Saint Francis extended his hand to receive this pledge, the wolf raised its right paw, and gently placed it on the hand of Saint Francis, giving its pledge with the only sign it could.** Then

Saint Francis said: **“Brother** Wolf, **I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, come with me now, don’t hesitate, so we can make this pact in the name of the Lord.”**

²¹The wolf obeyed and, like the meekest lamb, immediately went with Saint Francis. The people of the city who saw this were **completely astonished**; and the news immediately spread through the whole town, so that everyone, old and young, both men and women, commoners and nobles, converged together on the town square, **where Saint Francis was standing with the wolf**. With this multitude of people gathered, Saint Francis got up and preached a marvelous sermon to them, saying among other things that such disasters are permitted because of sin, and that the consuming flames of Gehenna, which hold the damned for all eternity, are more dangerous than the frenzy of a wolf which can kill only the body, and how much one should fear being sunk in the pit of hell, when one small animal held such a multitude in such great fear and danger. **“My very dear friends, return to the Lord and do worthy penance, and the Lord will free you now from the wolf, and in the future from the pit of consuming fire.”**

²⁷Then he said to them: **“My dear friends, listen! Brother** Wolf, **who stands here before you, promised me to make peace with you, and he made a pledge of this promise: he promised never to hurt you in any way, if you promise to give him what he needs every day. And for this**