

## To Bless is Best, To Curse is Worst

### Starring

Saint Isidore the Farmer, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Teresa of Ávila

### Materials

**Saint Isidore the Farmer:** Rake; burlap bag; Farmer's Almanac; bibbed overalls; red handkerchief sticking halfway out of back pocket

**Saint Francis of Assisi:** Stuffed animals, including a rabbit; real or artificial flower; optional monk's habit

**Saint Teresa of Ávila:** Satchel; prayer book; cell phone; optional nun's habit with veil

### Staging

- A fake rock is near center stage (crumpled brown paper over a small stool or milk crate).
- Stuffed animals, including a rabbit, are strategically placed to one side of the rock.

*(Saint Isidore walks out to the center of the stage, carrying a rake. He begins to vigorously rake an imaginary field. He stops for a moment, leans on his rake, and takes the handkerchief out of his back pocket to mop his brow. He returns the handkerchief to his pocket, leans his rake against the rock, and then stands with his arms crossed, as if in deep thought.)*

**ISIDORE:** *(Looking up)* Hey God? Hi, this is Isidore again. You know, Isidore the Farmer? *(Pause)* I know we talked about beans for this ridge, but now that I see where the closest river is, and the way those trees block the morning sun over there, I think it's probably a better spot for corn. *(Pause)* Yep, corn. *(Sighs and turns to sit on the rock, twists his face in confusion, and scratches his head)* The question is, though, what kind of corn? White corn, yellow corn, sweet corn, feed corn, popping corn? I'm glad you have created so many different kinds of corn, Lord—I mean, you know how much my wife and I *love* corn—but maybe just this once you could help me choose what *kind* of corn would work best up here. Maybe I should think about what Maria likes to make with corn. Let's see, *(Counting on his fingers)* there's corn fritters, cornmeal muffins, Johnny cake, corn tortillas, corn on the cob, creamed corn, corn flakes, corn relish, corn-and-cheese casserole, corn chowder, corn dogs. . . .

*Enter Saint Francis, sniffing a flower and walking dreamily.*

**FRANCIS:** Good morning, Saint Isidore.

**ISIDORE:** Oh, good morning, Saint Francis. Nice day, isn't it!

**FRANCIS:** Why, yes it is. It's a very nice day. *(Looking up)* Oh, thank you, Gracious God, for this glorious, glorious day! *(Isidore continues silently counting off foods made with corn.)* Good morning, Brother Sun! Good morning—er, good night—Sister Moon. Greetings, Brother Clouds. God sure gave you extra fluffiness today. It looks good on you. *(Francis looks down and sees a few animals on the ground. He greets each of them.)* Good morning, Sister Squirrel! My, aren't you bright-eyed and bushy-tailed this morning! And Brother Dog! What's the matter? Cat got your tongue? Oh, come on. Don't growl at me. It was only a joke. And Brother Rabbit . . .

**ISIDORE:** *(Snapping to attention)* Rabbit! What rabbit? Is that pesky rabbit back to finish off my carrot crop?

**FRANCIS:** He just wants a snack. Don't hurt him!

**ISIDORE:** I won't, I just want to frighten him a little. *(Looking up)* God, I'm sorry to show any disregard for one of your dear creatures. It's just that I'd like to keep at least a *few* carrots for the Missus and me. Hmmm, I wonder what Maria could make if we had enough carrots? *(Begins counting off on his fingers again)* Let's see, there's cooked carrots, and peas and carrots. What else? Anybody? *(Looks out to the audience and solicits a few answers)*

**FRANCIS:** So you're not going to hurt Brother Rabbit, right?

**ISIDORE:** Me? Heavens, no! But you really need to talk to him, Francis. I mean, he might actually listen to you. See, I've been noticing this wolf prowling around lately, and well, that rabbit would look *really* good to Mister Wolf—if you know what I mean. *(Isidore rubs his belly.)*

**FRANCIS:** *Sister* Wolf.

**ISIDORE:** What?

**FRANCIS:** *Sister* Wolf, not *Mister* Wolf—he’s a she. And she’s pretty harmless anyway; I’ve already talked to her. She’s just out looking for food scraps to give to her babies.

**ISIDORE:** Oh no, Francis! Not babies?!? It’s a good way to scare the rabbits away, I guess, but really! The last thing I need is a bunch of little wolves running around, chasing after my chickens so they won’t lay eggs!

**FRANCIS:** But Isidore, every baby is a blessing from God—even baby wolves!

**ISIDORE:** Yeah, well, there won’t be any baby chicks hatching into little blessings if my hens won’t lay eggs. Tell Mister-Sister, er, Sister-Mister Wolf to keep her cubs on a tight leash, then, okay?

*Sudden, loud, crashing noise is heard from offstage, followed by a mule’s braying, and then a loud frustrated human bellow. Isidore and Francis look back and forth at each other, then toward the sound of an offstage voice. They crane their necks to see who it is.*

**TERESA:** *(Loudly and sarcastically from offstage)* What?!? Oh, very funny God! VERY funny. Well, no wonder you have so few of them! Ugh!

*Teresa walks on stage a little disheveled, flapping her hands, acting as if she’s dripping wet. Isidore rushes over to her, pulls his handkerchief out of his pocket, and hands it to her. She begins drying off.*

**FRANCIS:** Why, Saint Teresa of Ávila! How has your day been so far?

**TERESA:** *(Dryly)* Wet!

**ISIDORE:** What happened?

**TERESA:** You know that new mule we got up at the convent? Talk about stubborn! I was riding him down the hill when we got to that narrow part of the stream. I begged and I pleaded, I pleaded and I begged. But no matter what I tried, he simply wouldn’t cross!

**FRANCIS:** *(In a loud aside to the audience, pointing his thumb back at Teresa)* Ha! And she calls the mule stubborn!

**TERESA:** In fact, you know what he did, that useless little braying hunk of hair, that poor excuse for a beast of burden—he bucked me off! He actually bucked me off right into the water! Look, even my prayer book got wet!

**FRANCIS:** Oh, no! *(Francis looks worried and cranes his neck to look behind Teresa. He runs over toward Teresa, holding his arms out as though he's going to give her a comforting hug. She holds her arms out to receive him, but to her surprise, Francis runs right past her, going offstage.)* Oh, no! Poor Brother Mule! Are you okay?

**TERESA:** *(Angrily, with hands on hips)* Poor Brother Mule, my hoof!

**ISIDORE:** *(Picking up his rake again)* Teresa, we're talking about Saint Francis, remember? Saint Francis of Assisi? He makes Dr. Doolittle look like an amateur.

**TERESA:** *(Sighing, then shaking her head and laughing)* You're right! I always seem to forget . . . Oh, but you know what the real kicker was?

**ISIDORE:** I dunno, the mule? He sure seemed to get the best of you!

**TERESA:** *(Exasperated)* Saint Isidore, please! I know I'm a tough cookie, but can't a girl get a *little* sympathy around here?

**ISIDORE:** I'm sorry, Teresa. You're right. Go ahead, tell me what happened.

**TERESA:** Okay, so this goofy mule dumps me into the water, right? And I'm so ticked off that I look up at God, and without even thinking, I almost start to cuss.

**ISIDORE:** Oh, Teresa! Not that! That's a direct violation of the Second Commandment!

**TERESA:** Well, you needn't worry; because, before I could get a word in edgewise, I heard God laugh at me. You know what he said? *(In a loud, deep, mock man's voice)* "Oh, Teresa! Ha, ha, ha! Don't you know? I treat all my friends this way!" So I said, "Oh yeah? Well, no wonder you have so few of them, then!" Hah!

**ISIDORE:** Always getting the last word in, I see—even with God! *(Looking up)* Really God, I don't know how you put up with her sometimes! *(To Teresa)* Did it

ever occur to you that maybe God, our Creator and Father, *made* that mule buck, maybe to give you a little lesson in humility? Anyway, listen. I'm really glad you're here because it's getting late and I'm trying to decide what to plant where. Say, do you happen to know what time the sun sets?

**TERESA:** No, but there's this clever app on my cell phone that could probably help us out. *(She rummages in her satchel, pulls out a cell phone, and tries in vain to turn it on. She puts it to her ear, pulls it away, and shakes it.)* Ugggh! My cell phone is waterlogged! It's ruined! Well, I'll . . . be . . . a . . . .

*Before an agitated Teresa can even finish her sentence, Francis races back on stage and cups his hand over her mouth. Teresa relaxes and nods her head.*

**TERESA:** Thanks, Francis! I needed that. I was about ready to . . . well, you know . . . *(Teresa stops, embarrassed, and in a stage whisper pretends like she's talking loud enough for only Francis to hear)* . . . curse.

**FRANCIS:** Yeah, so I noticed.

**TERESA:** So????

**FRANCIS:** What?

**TERESA:** Aren't you gonna say it? You know *(Using a mock man's voice again)*: "To bless is best! To curse is worst"?

**FRANCIS:** Actually, I was going to say "Where there is hatred, let me sow love." Except the person who knows the most about sowing is the farmer saint over there. But Teresa, you know how it works with God, you know the rules. The Second Commandment says . . .

**TERESA:** *(Eagerly and confidently)* Oh, I know . . . Only God, who is powerful enough to create all of existence, has the right to curse it. Unless God says otherwise, *all* creation is a blessing.

**FRANCIS:** Even stubborn mules!

**TERESA:** Yes, Francis, even stubborn mules! Thank God . . . *(Catching herself, looking up and cupping her hands to shout up to God)* Thank you, God! I may be stubborn, but I also know that, thanks to you, I'm *very* blessed!

*Isidore and Francis nod in agreement and walk towards Teresa, clapping her on the back and congratulating her. The three walk offstage. Skit ends.*