



Brother Wolf and the Star Canopy

Once upon a time, as the sun began to sink below the hills of Assisi, the sky turned a deep, magical shade of velvet purple. The birds stopped their chattering in the ancient oak trees, and the forest began to whisper its evening song.

Deep in the woods, St. Francis walked quietly. He wore a simple brown robe, and his footsteps made no sound on the soft, damp moss of Mother Earth. Francis loved the twilight, because he knew that when the human world went to sleep, the unseen world of nature began to dream.

As he walked, a soft breeze rustled the leaves. “*Goodnight, Brother Wind,*” Francis whispered, taking a deep, slow breath of the cool evening air. The wind blew gently around him, carrying away the leftover business of the day, leaving the forest completely still.

Soon, Francis came to a clearing where a large, gray wolf was waiting for him. This was the Wolf of Gubbio. Once, the wolf had been wild and frightened, but Francis had shown him kindness, and now they were the truest of friends.

The wolf curled up at Francis’s feet, resting his heavy chin on the mossy ground. Francis sat beside him and gently stroked his thick, soft fur.

“*The day is done, Brother Wolf,*” Francis reassured in a low, comforting voice. “*Look up.*”

Above them, through the branches of the trees, the first silver stars began to blink into the sky, and the beautiful Lady Moon showed her bright face.

“Thank you, Brother Fire, for the light of the stars,” Francis said softly, watching the lights twinkle above. *“And thank you, Sister Water,”* he added, listening to the tiny, musical trickle of a nearby stream splashing over smooth river stones.

The wolf let out a long, contented sigh. His eyes grew heavy, and his breathing became slow and steady—*in and out, in and out*. Francis closed his eyes too, feeling the deep, solid strength of Mother Earth holding them both safely up, just like she holds the roots of the tallest trees and the dens of the sleeping foxes.

Francis placed a gentle hand on the wolf’s head and whispered a final blessing into the quiet night:

*“May the Air bring you sweet dreams.
May the Stars keep you warm.
May the Water wash away all your worries.
May the Earth hold you safe until dawn.”*

The forest was completely asleep now. The wolf was dreaming of running through fields of green clover, and Francis smiled, wrapped tightly in the peaceful blanket of the night.

And just like Brother Wolf and the quiet woods, it is now time for you to close your eyes, take a deep breath, and let the Earth hold you safe all through the night.

As above, so below. Blessed be, and sweet dreams.*

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*\*Earth-centered families can end the story with, “As above, so below. Blessed be”.*

*\*Faith-based families can end the story with, “Thank you, Lord, for Your beautiful creation”.*

*\*Secular and nature-centered families can end the story with, “Goodnight to the stars, goodnight to the trees, goodnight to the buzzing little bees. Sleep tight”.*

# Brother Wolf Star Lantern Craft

## *Supplies*

- \* A clean smooth glass craft jar with a lid
- \* Leaves or flowers found in nature
- \* School glue (diluted 50/50 with water) or Mod Podge (undiluted)
- \* Spong paintbrush
- \* Twine or ribbon
- \* Battery-operated LED fairy lights, or a battery tea light
- \* Tape

## *Step-By-Step Instructions*

### **Step 1: Gather Your Nature Items**

Take a walk outside with your child. Ask her to find four or five flat leaves or flower petals. Look for thin, flexible leaves because stiff or crunchy ones won't stick as easily to the rounded jar.

### **Step 2: Prep the Jar**

Turn your clean and dry jar upside down on a piece of parchment paper. Using the paintbrush spread a thin, even layer of diluted school glue all over the outside of the jar.

### **Step 3: Create the Silhouette**

Have your child gently press her leaves and flower petals onto the wet glue. Carefully press the edges down to make sure all surfaces make contact with the glue.

### **Step 4: Seal and Protect**

Paint another thin layer of glue over the top of the leaves and flower petals to seal the plants so they won't peel or dry out. Don't worry if the jar looks cloudy when the glue is wet, it will dry clear within a few hours.

### **Step 5: Tie the Bow**

Once the jar is completely dry, turn it upright and tie a bow with the twine around the neck of the jar.

### **Step 6: Create the Stars**

Unravel the battery-operated fairy lights and loosely drop them inside the jar, taping the battery pack to the underside of the lid so it's hidden.

## **How to use the Brother Wolf Star Lantern**

When it's time for bed, carefully open the jar and turn on the fairy lights. Screw the lid back on tightly and turn the bedroom lights off. Your child will fall asleep under the stars and surrounded by the peaceful forest just like St. Francis and Brother Wolf did in the story.