



The Blessing of the Animals

*The Blessing of the Animals is held each year at
St. Margaret's in remembrance of St. Francis of Assisi,
who had a great love for all of God's creatures.
It is held on the Sunday closest to October 4,
the feast day of St. Francis.*

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Little Rock, AR 72223
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The Blessing of the Animals

Hymn *All things bright and beautiful* (sung by all)

Refrain:

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.

Verse:

Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors, he made their tiny wings.

Repeat Refrain

Opening We do not bless animals to make them holy. We bless them because they are holy and worthy of blessing. St. Francis believed that all nature reflected God, that you could see the beauty of God in all creation. He called the sun, moon, wind and earth his brothers and sisters. He loved all creatures great and small and treated them like family, just as we do our own pets. That is why we bring our brother and sister animals here today.

Prayer O God, we thank you for making the animals to brighten our lives. Help us to save them from danger as Noah did. Help us to love them and care for them as St. Francis did. And when we see the animals that you have made, help us to remember that you are holy and worthy of praise. In the name of the Father (who thought up the giraffe and the zebra) and of the Son (who was named after the beautiful white Lamb) and the Holy Spirit (who came to us as a Dove. **Amen.**

A Reading from Genesis And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifty day. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."



Prayers and Thanksgivings

O God, who has made all the earth and every creature that dwells therein: Help us, we pray you, to treat with compassion the living creatures entrusted to our care, that they may not suffer from our neglect nor become the victims of any cruelty; and grant that in caring for them we may find a deeper understanding of your love for all creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of earth and sky and sea; for the richness of mountains, plains, and rivers; for the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers. We praise you for these good gifts, and pray that we may safeguard them for our posterity. Grant that we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation, to the honor and glory of your Name, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Blessed are you, Lord God, for all living creatures you have made. You keep them in your care and not one of them is lost without you knowing. They glorify you, each in its own way, and speak to us of your beauty and love. Bless them and keep them from harm. They unquestionably accept their place in the rhythm of your creation. May we respect them and cherish them for they are your gift to us; through them may we come to know you better and praise you, their Creator. Blessed be the love and joy that they bring to us. **Amen.**

O God, you are infinite, unbounded Love, and will not allow the love which exists between your creatures to perish: We pray for those animals who have died. Comfort all those who mourn, especially those who have lost a beloved pet. **Amen.**

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The animals and people gather. The priest goes to each animal, asking the owner its name and blessing it. A pine bough may be used to sprinkle holy water over each animal, or the priest may bless each animal with laying on of hands.

*The Celebrant may bless the animals with these or similar words: May your days be full of sunshine and good things to eat. May your owners treat you always with respect and kindness. And may you continue to praise God, your creator, by simply being what you are. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.***

Following the Blessing of the Animals, all are invited to a reception in their honor.



from the book, *Bless All Creatures Here Below*
written and illustrated by Judith Gwyn Brown



Collects for Private Meditation

O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

O God, who made everything good, teach us to love what you have made. Help us to see you in the stars and planets, the trees and flowers, the rocks and the rivers, and especially in these pets of ours you have entrusted to our care. How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth. Amen.

One day Francis and his followers came to a valley where birds of many kinds were gathered. When he saw them, Francis left his companions and ran toward the birds. They were apparently waiting for him. Instead of taking wing as they would usually do, they stayed while he spoke to them. "My companions, the birds," he said, "you should praise your Creator very much and always love him; he gave you feathers to clothe you, wings so that you might fly, and everything else that you need. God has made you most noble of his creatures, giving you a home in the purity of the air; and though you neither sow nor reap, he protects and governs you without any anxiety on your part."

The birds began to crane their necks, extend their wings, open their mouths, and gaze at him. Then he blessed them, and making the sign of the cross over them, he gave them permission to fly away to some other place. Then he went on his own way rejoicing and giving thanks to God whom all creatures venerate humbly and in their own way.

From that day on, he solicitously admonished all birds, all animals, and all reptiles, and even creatures that have no feeling, to praise and love their Creator. Daily, when the name of the Savior had been invoked, he saw and experienced their obedience.

