St. Francis Day - Blessing of Pets Liturgy  
October 4th or a Day When Convenient

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| Each year on or near the Feast Day of St. Francis,  which falls on October 4th, there are requests for a  liturgy of blessing for animals. The Rev. Robert P.  Morrison of the Episcopal Parish of St. James in  Lincoln City, Oregon responded to these requests in  1998 by posting a liturgy to those subscribed to  "Propertalk" (see our "RCL List Servers" page). With  the Rev. Morrison's permission we have adapted and  edited that service for presentation here.  SOURCES:  "Blessing of Pets" contained in "Blessings for God's People: A  Book of Blessings for All Occasions" compiled (from a variety of  sources) by The Rev. Thomas G. Simons, and published in 1983 by  Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 46556 as adapted by Rev.  Robert P Morrison, St James Episcopal Church, Lincoln, OR.  Hymn selection, editing and presentation by Rev. Richard J.  Fairchild, St. Andrew's United Church, Golden, BC.  RUBRICS AND COMMENTS  Children, if present, can be invited to read the Lessons and the  Psalm.  A brief homily can follow upon the reading of the Lessons. Let the  mood of the animals be a guide to length. Something appropriately  Franciscan and short might be ventured. After all the animals are  not going to be impressed by even the most eloquent of preachers.  The two hymns chosen here are, of course, by St. Francis.    You may wish to have some form of meal at the Church afterwards  for the humans. Beforehand, you might go to local pet stores  whose owners, usually, are more than happy to give "sample" packs  of dog, cat and bird food, so the animals get treats also. (Give  them verbal credit as you pass out the treats at the end of the  blessing.)  The usual turnout is dogs, cats, birds and rats, but we've had  fish (No, I don't touch the fish, just the water!) gerbils,  snakes, lizards, and from time to time, stuffed teddy bears. And  I bless (with the sign of the cross) both animal and owner. I've  been pleased to have two Jewish members of the community attend  the past two years with their dogs (two St. Bernards and a couple  of spaniels) and I use the Aaronic blessing with them.  The local newspaper sometimes comes to take pictures.  THE BLESSING OF PETS  THE CALL TO WORSHIP  Leader Bless the Lord, all you his creatures,  All And forget not all his benefits.  Leader Let us pray. Most high, omnipotent good Lord, grant  your people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of  this world; that, following the way of blessed Francis,  we may for love of you delight in your whole creation  with perfectness of joy. O God, you have made us and  all living things. You are even more wonderful than  what you have made. We thank you for giving us these  pets who bring us joy. As you take care of us, so also  we ask your help that we might take care of those  who trust us to look after them. By doing this, we  share in your own love for all creation. We ask this in  Jesus' name.  All Amen.  HYMN: "All Creatures of Our God and King"  A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS 1:24-31  (NRSV) 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. {25} 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. {26}  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." {27}  So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God  he created them; male and female he created them. {28} God  blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and  multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have  dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the  air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."  {29} God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding  seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree  with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. {30}  And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the  air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything  that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant  for food." And it was so. {31} God saw everything that he  had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was  evening and there was morning, the sixth day.  Reader This is The Word of the Lord.  All Thanks be to God.  A READING FROM PSALM 104:10-25  (NRSV) You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they  flow between the hills, {11} giving drink to every wild  animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. {12} By the  streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they  sing among the branches. {13} From your lofty abode you  water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit  of your work. {14} You cause the grass to grow for the  cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food  from the earth, {15} and wine to gladden the human heart,  oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the  human heart. {16} The trees of the LORD are watered  abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. {17} In  them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in  the fir trees. {18} The high mountains are for the wild  goats; the rocks are a refuge for the coneys. {19} You have  made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time  for setting. {20} You make darkness, and it is night, when  all the animals of the forest come creeping out. {21} The  young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from  God. {22} When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in  their dens. {23} People go out to their work and to their  labour until the evening. {24} O LORD, how manifold are your  works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full  of your creatures. {25} Yonder is the sea, great and wide,  creeping things innumerable are there, living things both  small and great.  Reader This is The Word of the Lord.  All Thanks be to God.  A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW 6:25-33  (NRSV) "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life,  what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your  body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and  the body more than clothing? {26} Look at the birds of the  air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and  yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more  value than they? {27} And can any of you by worrying add a  single hour to your span of life? {28} And why do you worry  about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they  grow; they neither toil nor spin, {29} yet I tell you, even  Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.  {30} But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is  alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he  not much more clothe you--you of little faith? {31}  Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What  will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' {32} For it is the  Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your  heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. {33}  But strive first for the kingdom of God and his  righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as  well.  Leader This is the gospel of our Lord  All Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.  HOMILY  *Bob writes concerning his usual practice for this service:*  *"I usually just 'wing it' talking about the way in which*  *we're all inter-related in creation and how we share a common*  *responsibility for the well-being of one another. I know I've referred*  *to the way that animals bring comfort, reduced blood pressure, etc.,*  *to those who are sick."*  THE PRAYERS  Leader Let us give thanks to God our Father for all his gifts  so freely bestowed upon us.... for the beauty and  wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and sea;  All We thank you, Lord.  Leader For the richness of the mountains, plains and rivers;  All We thank you, Lord.  Leader For all that is gracious in the lives of men and women;  All We thank you, Lord.  Leader For all creatures that breathe, and move, and have  life;  All We thank you, Lord.  Leader For the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers  and trees;  All We thank you, Lord.  Leader For the trust you have shown in giving into our care  these, our pets;  All We thank you, Lord.  Leader That each pet here may be treasured with care;  All We pray to you, Lord.  Leader That we may love and honour all your works, O God;  All We pray to you, Lord.  Leader That we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment  of your abundant creation;  All To the honour and glory of your name, now and forever,  we pray to you, Lord.  THE BLESSING OF EACH PET (INDIVIDUALLY)  "N.*(name of animal, i.e. "Smokey", not cat/dog)* may you be  blessed in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the  Holy Spirit. May you and N. *(the name of the "owner")* enjoy  life together and find joy with the God who created you."  alternate form - useful for those of other faith traditions  "N., may you be blessed in the Name of God who created you, and may  you and N. *(the owner)* enjoy life together with our God."  THE BLESSING PRAYER  All Most high, almighty Lord, our Creator, yours are the  praise, the glory, the honour and all blessings! To  you alone do all things belong. Be praised for giving  us the animals, birds and fish which fill your world.  May we think of you and thank you when we play with and  care for our pets. Be praised for making us so happy  to have our pets and to have them to play with. We ask  you, Lord, that we may be good to our pets always, so  that they may be happy also. Help us always to take  care of them so that they will be healthy. O God, your  world is wonderful. May we all come into your even  greater world of the kingdom of heaven where we shall  see even more wonderful things and where we shall live  and love for ever. This we ask to your eternal praise,  and to our blessing. Amen.  HYMN Make Me a Channel of Your Peace  BENEDICTION      *copyright - Rev. Robert Morrison and Rev. Richard J. Fairchild 1998 - 2006*  *please acknowledge the appropriate author if citing these sermons.* |