

## *Blessing of Animals*

*Praying with all God's creatures on the fest of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and the environment (October 4<sup>th</sup>)*

### **Objective**

This spiritual activity brings the community together around the Word to express our thanksgiving for God's creation of the animals, our "brothers and sisters". We gather with a heart sensitive to sustaining the delicate balance of nature and ready to follow in the footsteps of Kateri Tekawitha and St. Francis of Assisi who testified to God's respect and love for birds and animals in their own lives. We will praise the Lord as our minister blesses the animals.

### **Duration**

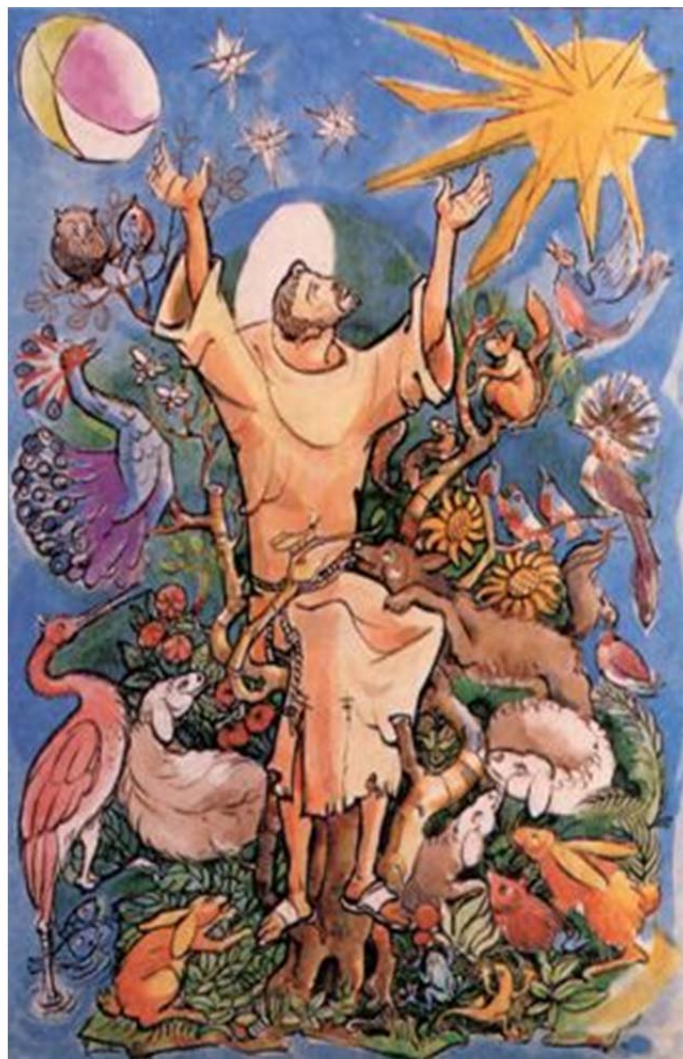
30 minutes

### **Materials**

- Chairs & table;
- small pledge papers;
- poster or bulletin board;
- pencils & pins;
- pictures of animals;
- animal blessing prayer;
- prayers and/or testimonials from children, youth, adults;
- song videos;
- laptop & speakers if there is no one to play a guitar.

### **Lieux suggérés**

Outdoors at the entry of the church or on a hill, beside a body of water or in a nearby green space to encourage the participation of neighbours.



### **Preparation**

*(Two weeks in advance)*

Do some publicity :  
"You are warmly invited to accompany your pets for a blessing of the animals on (date, time, location). Cats, dogs, birds, turtles and snakes, we hope to see you all there!"

## Arrival

(Before starting)

Before the service begins, have someone lead the assembly in practising the hymn: All Creatures of our God and King, 3:56 min.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d3g>

[O6qDLNA](#)

## Welcome

(5 minutes)

If the group is small, you can gather in a circle and ask each one to introduce himself and his animal.

We are happy to see you here and we welcome you and all our animal friends to join together in prayer on this feast of St. Francis of Assisi. We have gathered to give thanks to God for his goodness, for the beauties of nature that surround us and today especially for animals which we will ask him to bless.

During the next 30 minutes or so, we will learn more about St. Francis, we will listen to scripture texts to help us rediscover our relationship with God and with his Creation, we will praise God with full hearts and with the desire to follow the example of St.

Francis who understood so well God's desire for the fulfillment of his Creation.

The blessing of the animals today reminds us to treat Creation, of which the animals are a part, with respect as shown in the book of Genesis. Safeguarding animal life is also a duty incumbent on future generations.



Did you know that St. Francis of Assisi is the animals' friend? We learn more about him in these words of another Franciscan, Bro. Roland Bonenfant:

*St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), popularly known in the era of romanticism as the "Birds' Saint", has always been known for his outstanding love of animals: birds, fish, ants, bees, rabbits, lambs, wolves. Why did he love them? First of all, because they are God's creatures. He liked to call them "brothers" and "sisters", recognizing that we are all children of the same Creator. We are told that St. Francis had a special predilection for animals who were suffering and for those like lambs who reminded him of the suffering Saviour.*

*St. Francis' special love for animals has to be situated within the context of his life: in the fullness of his discovery of the Lord, the Poverello of Assisi had learned to marvel at everything. His famous poem, the "Canticle of the Creatures" is a rhapsody to the Creator of all beings. Because of his attention to "our Sister Mother Earth", on November 29, 1979 he was proclaimed the "heavenly patron of ecologists".*

Source :

<https://www.franciscain.org/le-coin-des-jeunes/francois-dassise-saint-ami-betes>

 **Prayer Service**  
(15 minutes)

 **Hymn: All Creatures of our God and King (3:56)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=od3gO6qDLNA>



 **Scripture Readings**

One or more texts from the following suggestions, could be used:

- Adam gives the animals their names (Genesis 2: 19-20)
- Noah is charged with safeguarding the animals (Genesis 6: 19-20)
- You must protect the weak, the animals, the earth (Exodus 23: 1-12)
- Return to the peace of paradise; the wolf shall live with the lamb (Isaiah 11: 6-8)
- The animals will teach us (Job: 11 7-10)
- The just man cares for his animals (Proverbs 12: 10, 27: 23), (Deut. 5:14), (Exodus 23: 12), (Luke 14: 5, 15:3-6)
- Proclaim the good news to the whole creation (Mark 16: 14-15), (Col. 1: 23)
- Praise God the creator and provider (Psalm 104)

**Psaume 104, .14-24**

*You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth*  
<sup>15</sup> *and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.*  
<sup>16</sup> *The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.*  
<sup>17</sup> *In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees.*  
<sup>18</sup> *The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.*  
<sup>19</sup> *He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.*  
<sup>20</sup> *You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about.*  
<sup>21</sup> *The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.*  
<sup>22</sup> *When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens.*  
<sup>23</sup> *Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.*  
<sup>24</sup> *O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.*

(Taken from Carnet du Carême 2012, Dav Fines & Norman Lévesque, Novalis)



## *Reflection*

Minister

Lord, we recognize that you treat us with love and we take great joy in being counted among your creatures. We want to tell you of our love for you and our happiness to have as our brothers and sisters: the sun, the moon, the birds, the wolves, the sheep and cattle, the squirrels, cats and dogs and all the other creatures. We thank you for your goodness and for your bountiful Creation that makes us want to care for and protect the smallest and most vulnerable of your creatures. We feel deeply connected with all the life you have created and we want to praise you in our song:

## *Hymn : Laudato si o mi signore*

(couplets 4 & 5)

The children, youth and adults now present their prayers to the Lord. Then, everyone takes a minute to fill out their pledge form (see Annex) which is collected at the same time as a souvenir of this event is passed out.

## *Children's prayer*

Examples

Thank you Heavenly Father for my parents, and grandparents, for my brothers and sisters and my whole family, my cat, my dog, my rabbit, my turtle. They make me happy when I run and play with them!  
Thank you for the lovely colours of my fish.  
Thank you for the soft fur of my bunny.  
Thank you Heavenly Father for my good dog who guards our house and keeps us safe.  
Thank you for the cows and the goats who give us their milk to drink.

## *Youth Prayers*

Examples

I thank you Creator God for my cat ...(name), my dog name who makes me laugh, keeps me company and makes us happy.

Creator God, I don't want animals to suffer, to be hurt, to be hungry, to be all alone. Melt the hearts that are hardened and help us to build a world of peace and respect for all your creatures.

Lord of the universe, I want all the endangered species to be able to survive. Show us how to help them and protect them.

Thank you Creator God for giving us St. Francis of Assisi who called all the animals his brothers and sisters. Help us also to feel this connection with all your creatures, to respect them for themselves, to encourage other people to care of Creation.

## *Adults' Prayer*

Examples

Thank you, Lord, for the pets who show us such affection and comfort us when we are sad or troubled. Thank you for my faithful dog who greets me every morning.

Thank you, Lord, for all the animals who have shared our lives over the years. Through them, we were able to meet new people and to interact with others.

We bless you, Lord, for drawing us to you through the ordinary creatures of the earth.

We bless you, Lord, for in feeding the birds of the air, you give us a sign of your paternal providence.

Help us, O Father, to be worthy guardians of your creation and to inspire in future generations the determination to safeguard the environment and to work for the sustainability of animal life.

## Pledge

The participants fill out the pledge form (see Annex) with their name and the name of their pet. They are invited to put the name and/or the photo of their animal on the bulletin board which will be displayed in the church at the next Sunday service. We ask the Lord to bless our animal companions and all the animals that live in our neighbourhood.

## Blessing of Animals

*"Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things.*

*Every single creature is full of God, and is a book about God.*

*Every creature is a word of God."*  
(Meister Eckhart)

The minister prays with his arms extended: O God, maker of all, we ask your blessing on every creature gathered here today, the large and the small. May they live happily with us in praise of you. Help us to love your creation and revere its sacredness. We ask this blessing in the name of the Creator, to whom every creature belongs. Amen.

As having the animals form a line may be stressful, another possibility would be for the minister to circulate through the congregation, ask the name of the animal, place his/her hand on the head of the animal (if appropriate) and bless the animal:

" \_ (pets name) \_ , you were created by God and you are loved by God. May you and your human family continue to be a blessing to each other, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Amen.

The Lord's Prayer can be said while the minister sprinkles the animals with holy water.

## Concluding Prayer

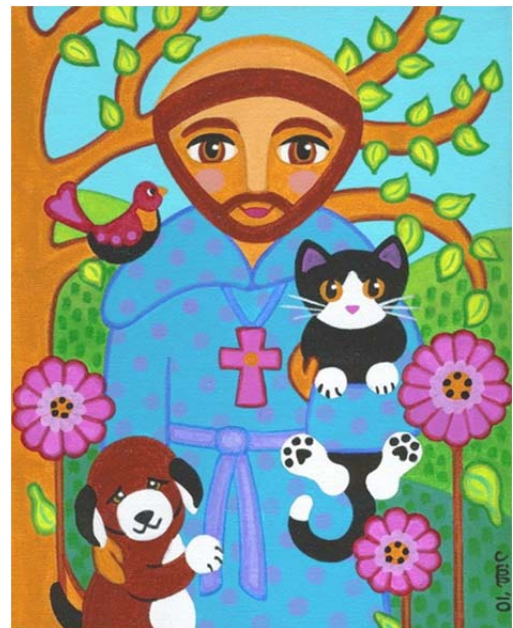
We thank you, Lord, for the gift of our animal companions; for the joy they bring us, for their beauty, for the love they show us. They are unfailingly faithful; we can count on them. They are a reflection of you, our loving God and Creator. Make us ever aware of our stewardship of creation and help us to be faithful in caring for all you have created. Amen

Go out into the world, love one another. Cherish your animal family. Show that the love of God permeates all life. May God bless and keep us. Amen

You may depart in peace after your animal companions have been blessed.

Hymn

[All Things Bright and Beautiful](#), 5:01 min.



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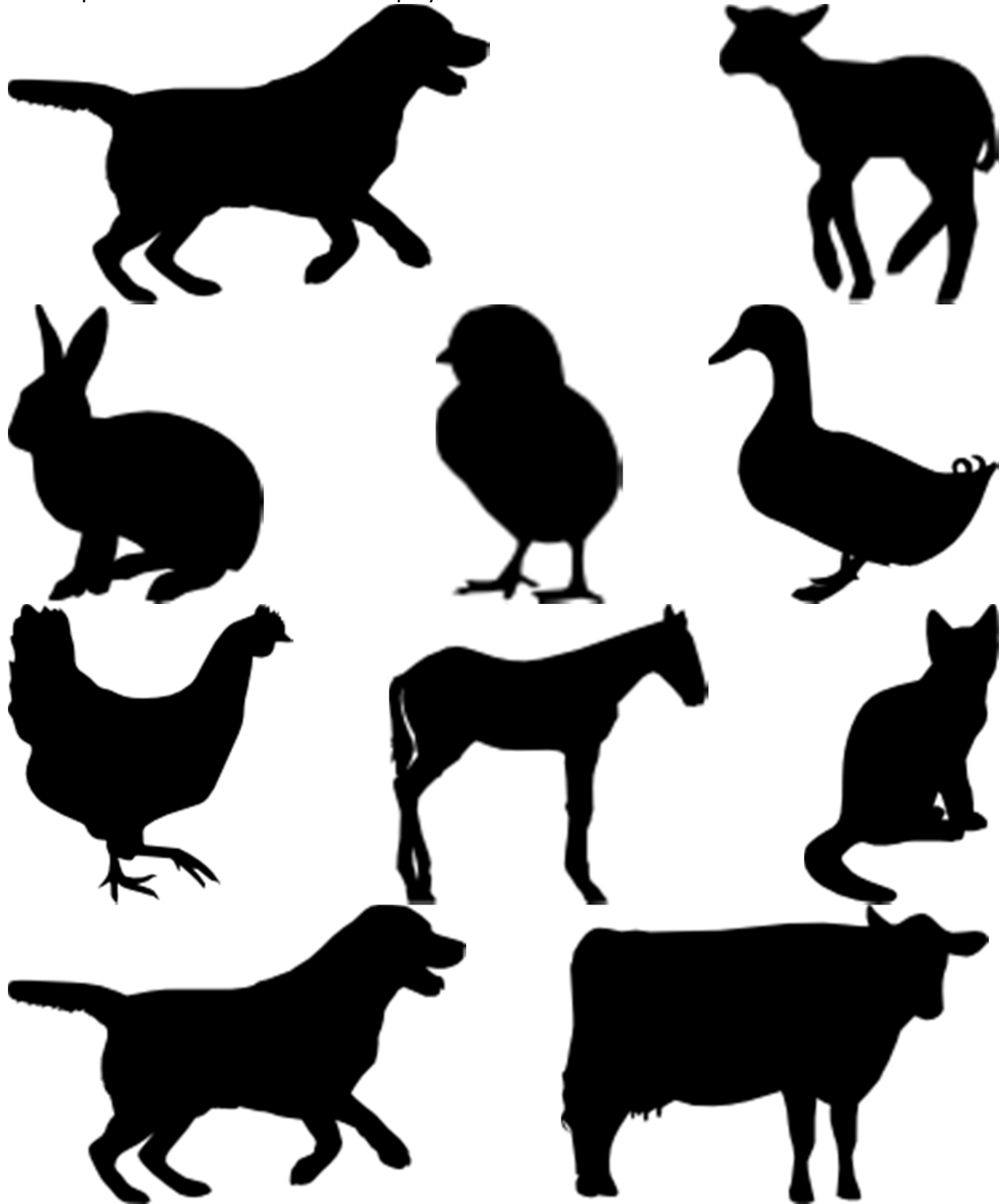
Doggy treats may be given out as people depart. St. Francis medals, animal bookmarks or calendars could be offered as souvenirs of this special day.



## Annex 1

### Animal cut-outs

Print silhouettes of pet animals to cut out for participants to attach their pet's name and post on the poster or bulletin board for display in the church.





Annex 2

**Thank you, Lord, for my friend \_\_\_\_\_ (pet's name)  
who brings me so much joy! I promise to take good care of  
him/her!**

**(your name) \_\_\_\_\_**

**Thank you, Lord, for my friend \_\_\_\_\_ (pet's name)  
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