



## **Blessing of the Animals Guide**

### **What is the Blessing of the Animals?**

The Blessing of the Animals recognizes that many animals were created by God to play a role in human existence. While a Blessing of Animals may be done on any day, it is a long-standing tradition to hold a Blessing of the Animals on October 4<sup>th</sup>, the official feast day of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis of Assisi is a 13<sup>th</sup> century saint, who among other things, is associated with caring for Creation. He is said to have preached to the birds and made treaties with wolves. He also composed a prayer dedicated to the glory of the natural world entitled, "Canticle of Creation." Bringing animals to be blessed is a way of acknowledging that what God has made is good, and to thank God for pets or working animals that have improved our lives.



### **What happens at a Blessing of the Animals?**

The Order for the Blessing of Animals allows for some adaptability depending on the circumstances of the place and people involved in the rite. However, the following elements are usually present:

- **Introductory Rites.** This may include singing a suitable song before the minister greets those present and begins in prayer. The prayer will focus on the connection between humans and animals and the role various animals have played in salvation history, both physically, such as ravens bring bread to Elijah; and spiritually, such as Christ being our Paschal Lamb.
- **Scripture Reading.** Generally, one of the accounts of Creation from Genesis will be read, but other Old Testament readings that focus on the relationship between man and beast, such as the account of Noah and the Ark, may also be read. Any of these readings will convey the message that Creation is good and benefits man, as well as highlighting man's role as steward of Creation.
- **Responsorial Psalm.** A psalm that praises God for the wonders of Creation is read or sung. The psalm celebrates not just the animals about to be blessed, but all that is good and beautiful in the natural world.
- **Intercessions.** A series of prayers are read. These prayers focus on thanking God for how humans have been blessed by Creation and asking for continued blessings.
- **Prayer of Blessing.** The minister extends his hands over the animals present and prays that they will continue play a helpful role for humanity. After the prayer, the minister may sprinkle those present—and the animals—with holy water.
- **Concluding Rite.** The minister dismisses the people with a prayer, and as with the introductory rites, a suitable song may be sung.

### **Why should we participate in the Blessing of the Animals?**

There are many reasons to participate in the Blessing of the Animals as a family! However, here are just two.

- First, both gratitude and petition are important parts of the Christian life. We should thank God for the many ways we have been blessed in our lives. We also should turn to God with those things we want or need. By participating in the Blessing of the Animals, we are, in a particular way, thanking Him for the joy and help a particular pet or working animal has brought to our lives and asking that He watch over them.
- Second, our faith should infuse every area of our life. As our Family Faith Formation motto, "Uniting the Heart of the Church with the Heart of the Home," proposes we should always be looking for ways to make our daily lives holy. Bringing animals to our parish to be blessed is a great way of sanctifying something as seemingly ordinary as a family pet.



## Blessing of the Animals Reflection

Family Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Names of Adult Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

First Names of Youth Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What animals did you bring with you to be blessed?

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\_\_\_\_\_

How have you been blessed by the animal(s) you brought with you?

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Did the Blessing of the Animals help you to connect with God and/or our parish community?  
If yes, how? If not, why not?

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What is one thing about the Blessing of the Animals that you would like to share with others?

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