

# St. Francis Day - Blessing of Pets Liturgy

## October 4th or a Day When Convenient

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.*