

Order for the Blessing of Animals

INTRODUCTION 942 According to the providence of the Creator, many animals have a certain role to play in human existence by helping with work or providing food and clothing. Thus when the occasion arises, for example, the feast of some saint, the custom of invoking God's blessing on animals may be continued.

943 The present order may be used by a priest or deacon. It may also be used by a layperson, who follows the rites and prayers designated for a lay minister.

944 While maintaining the structure and chief elements of the rite, the minister should adapt the celebration to the circumstances of the place and the people involved.

945 Whenever just one or a few animals are to be blessed or the blessing of animals is to be included in some other celebration, the [shorter rite](#) provided in nos. 962-965 may be used.

I. ORDER OF BLESSING

INTRODUCTORY RITES 946 *When the community has gathered, a suitable song may be sung. After the singing, the minister says:* In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All make the sign of the cross and reply: Amen.

947 *A minister who is a priest or deacon greets those present in the following or other suitable words, taken mainly from sacred Scripture.*

May God, who is wonderful in all his works, be with you all.

All make the following or some other suitable reply. And also with you.

948 *A lay minister greets those present in the following words.* God has done all things wisely, let us praise his name, now and for ever.

R. Amen.

949 *In the following or similar words, the minister prepares those present for the blessing.* The animals of God's creation inhabit the skies, the earth, and the sea. They share in the fortunes of human existence and have a part in human life. God, who confers his gifts on all living things, has often used the service of animals or made them symbolic reminders of the gifts of salvation. Animals were saved from the flood and afterwards made a part of the covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:9-10). The paschal lamb brings to mind the passover sacrifice and the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt (Exodus 12:3-14); a giant fish saved Jonah (Jonah 2:1-11); ravens brought bread to Elijah (1 Kings 17:6); animals were included in the repentance enjoined on humans (Jonah 3:7).

And animals share in Christ's redemption of all of God's creation. We therefore invoke the divine blessing on these animals (through

the intercession of Saint N.). As we do so, let us praise the Creator and thank him for setting us over other creatures of the earth. Let us also ask him that, remembering our human dignity, we may walk always in his law.

READING OF THE WORD OF GOD 950 *A reader, another person present, or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture.*

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the book of Genesis: (1:1, 20-28)

Have dominion over all living things that move on the earth. In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, God said, "Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky." And so it happened: God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of swimming creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw how good it was and God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth." Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds." And so it happened: God made all kinds of wild animals, all kinds of cattle, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. God saw how good it was. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground."

God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth."

951 *Or:* Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the book of Genesis: (2:19-20a: *The man gave names to all the animals.*)

So the LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of them would be its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals.

952 *Or:*

Genesis 6:17-23 — *Of all other living creatures you shall bring two into the ark to live there with you.*

Isaiah 11:6-10 — *Animals will be tame and there shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain.*

953 *As circumstances suggest, one of the following responsorial psalms may be sung or said, or some other suitable song.*

Response: O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth!

Psalms 8 O LORD, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth! You have exalted your majesty above the heavens.

Response.

When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you set in place— What is man that you should be mindful of him or the son of man that you should care for him? **Response.**

You have given him rule over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yes, and beasts of the field, The birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas. **Response.**

Psalms 104:1-2a, 10-12, 25, 27-28 **Response:** (v. 27) All look to you to give them their food in due season.

Psalms 147:5-6, 7-8, 9-11 **Response:** (v. 1a) O praise the Lord! How good to sing praise to our God.

954 *As circumstances suggest, the minister may give those present a brief explanation of the biblical text, so that they may understand through faith the meaning of the celebration.*

INTERCESSIONS:

955 *As circumstances suggest, the prayer of blessing may be preceded by the intercessions. The minister introduces them and an assisting minister or one of those present announces the intentions. From the following intentions those best suited to the occasion may be used or adapted, or other intentions that apply to the particular circumstances may be composed. The intentions are followed immediately by the prayer of blessing, no. 957 or no. 958.*

The minister says:

God created us and placed us on this earth to be the stewards of all living things and so to proclaim the glory of their Creator. Let us, then, praise God, saying:

Response. How wonderful are the works of your hands, O Lord!

Or:

Response. Blessed be God for ever.

Assisting minister: Blessed are you, O Lord, who created the animals and gave us the ability to train them to help us in our work. (Let us bless the Lord:) **Response.**

Assisting minister: Blessed are you, O Lord, who gave us food from animals to replenish our energies. (Let us bless the Lord:)

Response.

Assisting minister: Blessed are you, O Lord, who for the sake of our comfort give us domestic animals as companions. (Let us bless the Lord:) **Response.**

Assisting minister: Blessed are you, O Lord, who show us a sign of your providence, as your Son told us, by caring for the birds of the air. (Let us bless the Lord:) **Response.**

Assisting minister: Blessed are you, O Lord, who offered your Son to us as the paschal lamb and in him willed that we should be called and should truly be your children. (Let us bless the Lord:) **Response.**

Assisting minister: Blessed are you, O Lord, who through your lowliest creatures never cease to draw us toward your love. (Let us bless the Lord:) **Response.**

956 *When there are no intercessions, the minister, before the prayer of blessing, says:*

Let us pray.

As circumstances suggest, all may then pray for a moment in silence before the prayer of blessing.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

957 *A minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched; a lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.*

O God, the author and giver of every gift, animals also are part of the way you provide help for our needs and labors. We pray (through the intercession of Saint N.) that you will make available for our use the things we need to maintain a decent human life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.

958 *Or:*

O God, you have done all things wisely; in your goodness you have made us in your image and given us care over other living things.

Reach out with your right hand and grant that these animals may serve our needs and that your bounty in the resources of this life may move us to seek more confidently the goal of eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Response:** Amen.

959 *After the prayer of blessing, as circumstances suggest, the minister may sprinkle those present and the animals with holy water.*

CONCLUDING RITE

960 *The minister concludes the rite by saying:*

May God, who created the animals of this earth as a help to us, continue to protect and sustain us with the grace his blessing brings, now and for ever. **Response:** Amen.

961 *It is preferable to end the celebration with a suitable song.*

II. SHORTER RITE

962 *At the beginning of the celebration, the minister says:* Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All reply: Who made heaven and earth.

963 *One of those present or the minister reads a short text of sacred Scripture, for example:*

Genesis 2:20a The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals.

See Psalm 8:7-9a You have given him rule over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea.

964 *With hands joined, the minister says the prayer of blessing.* O God, you have done all things wisely; in your goodness you have made us in your image and given us care over other living things. Reach out with your right hand and grant that these animals may serve our needs and that your bounty in the resources of this life may move us to seek more confidently the goal of eternal life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Response:** Amen.

965 *After the prayer of blessing, as circumstances suggest, the minister may sprinkle those present and the animals with holy water.*

Prayer Source: *Book of Blessings* by Prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1989