

ASCENSION EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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The helpful place.

Blessing of the Animals
October 2, 2016
3:00 pm



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Blessing of the Animals

Celebrant Bless the Lord, all you his creatures,

People And forget not all his benefits.

The Blessing of St. Francis Medals

Let us pray. O God the King of Saints, we thank you for the life and example of Saint Francis, servant of poverty, gentleness, and peace. We ask your blessing upon all your creatures and upon these medals which we bless now in your Name. Grant that the animals we love may be kept safe from harm and continue to grace our lives, through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. **Amen.**

We gather to honor the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, and to honor the animals who share our lives. St. Francis is the patron saint of animals and of ecology. Brother Francis gloried in the beauty of the world God created, and we recall many tales of his affection for animals and their trust in him. Today we thank God for the gifts of companionship and beauty which animals and pets bring to our lives and homes, and ask God's blessing on them. **Amen.**

The Reading

Genesis 1:20-25

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and morning, the fifth day. 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. 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.

Celebrant The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

The Homily

The Rev. Todd Bryant

The Prayers

Celebrant 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;

People We thank you, Lord.

Celebrant For the richness of the mountains, plains and rivers;

People We thank you, Lord.

Celebrant For all that is gracious in the lives of men and women;

People We thank you, Lord.

Celebrant For all creatures that breathe, and move, and have life;

People We thank you, Lord.

Celebrant For the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers and trees;

People We thank you, Lord.

Celebrant For the trust you have shown in giving into our care these, our pets;

People We thank you, Lord.

Celebrant That each pet here may be treasured with care;

People We pray to you, Lord.

Celebrant That we may love and honor all your works, O God;

People We pray to you, Lord.

Celebrant That we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation;

People To the honor and glory of your name, now and forever, we pray to you, Lord.

Celebrant We invite all who have animals to bring them forward now for a blessing.

The Blessing of Each Pet (Individually)

The Blessing Prayer

Celebrant Let us pray,

People Most high, almighty Lord, our Creator, yours are the praise, the glory, the honor and all blessings! To you alone do all things belong. Praise to you 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. Praise to you 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 wonderful things forever. This we ask to your eternal praise, and to our blessing. Amen.

The Dismissal

Celebrant Alleluia, Alleluia! Go as instruments of God's peace. Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

People Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia!



Why do we bless pets on this day?

St. Francis of Assisi lived in Italy in the 12th century. Francis grew up in a wealthy family, but as a young man, he renounced his wealth and worldly possessions and lived very simply.

When Francis spoke, everyone listened, including the animals. He told the animals that Jesus loved them too.

There was a wolf who lived in the town of Gubbio. The wolf came into the town each evening frightening the inhabitants or eating them. Francis went to speak to "Brother Wolf:" and discovered that the wolf was hungry. Francis explained that being hungry was not reason enough to eat people and their pets, or to terrorize them. The wolf became very gentle, the people fed him and he gave the children in the town rides on his back.

In the town of Gubbio, Francis built a small outdoor stable and put people in the stable to portray Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the angels. Then he added the animals - cow, donkey, sheep, etc. When asked, Francis said, "Surely the animals praised the new Messiah just as the shepherds and angels did." And so today, we have Christmas crèches with people and animals praising the newborn Messiah.

In honor of this blessed saint of the church we gather today with our animals - our pets, our service animals, police dogs and horses, zoo animals and all God's creatures and give thanks for what they do for us and for what they mean to us.