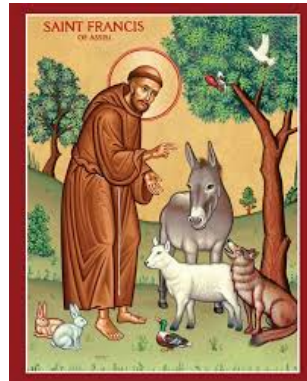


Blessing of Family Pets around the Feast of St Francis of Assisi (October 4)



WHAT IS THIS INITIATIVE?

This is a resource for parishes to use around the feast of St Francis of Assisi. It envisages parishes extending an invitation to people locally to bring their family pets to a location (i.e. the church car park) for a brief prayer that will include a blessing of family pets. It may be an occasion to offer a bit of outdoor hospitality afterwards.

WHY THIS INITIATIVE?

This initiative gives a parish the opportunity to connect with a very wide cross section of families in a very positive and inclusive manner. It recognises the importance of the family pet within many homes where they are often a central part of the fabric of family life. In their care of the family pet, both adults and children are, in a very real way, practicing for a wider care for and awareness of all God's creation.

In *Laudato Si* Pope Francis writes that 'we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes...by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory...'

Quoting the Catechism, he reminds us that "Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness."

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

This resource offers a parish bulletin notice and a short order of blessing.

HOW DOES THIS WORK IN A PARISH?

1. Decide when and where you are going to have this blessing, for example it might be on a Sunday afternoon close to October 4th.
2. Advertise the event in the parish bulletin and parish social media outlets. A notice could also go in the local newspaper, pet shops, schools...(see sample bulletin notice for template)
3. Review the prayer resource and decide how you will pray this prayer and if you will offer some hospitality on the day. Consider if there is anything else you might like to do in conjunction with the event, for example, in larger towns a mobile pet clinic could be invited or local vets could be available to offer advice on pet care.

BULLETIN NOTICE TEMPLATE

PARISH BLESSING OF FAMILY PETS

Families and individuals are warmly invited to bring along their family pets for a special blessing on **date and time and place**.

Please help us pass on this invitation from the parish by word of mouth or on social media to your neighbours, friends and family.

We look forward to seeing all creatures great and small- we just ask that owners take care to keep their pets and others safe and secure on the day!



A SHORT ORDER OF SERVICE

All make the sign of the cross.

The leader begins: Wonderful are all God's works. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All respond: Both now and for ever.

The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing:

The animals of God's creation inhabit the skies, the earth, and the sea. They share in the ways of human beings. They have a part in our family lives.

Francis of Assisi recognized this when he called the animals, wild and tame, his brothers and sisters. Remembering Francis' love for God's creation, in our prayer today we invoke God's blessing on these animals, and we thank God for letting us share the earth with all the creatures.

Scripture

Leader: Let us first listen to the words of scripture:

Reader: A reading from the book of Genesis (Genesis 1:20-25)
[In the beginning,] 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.

The Word of the Lord.

All respond: Thanks be to God.

After a time of silence, the following prayers are offered.

Leader: We offer praise to God for the wonder of creation. Our response is 'We thank you Lord.'

Reader We 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.

Reader For the richness of the mountains, plains and rivers;
All We thank you, Lord.

Reader For all that is gracious in the lives of men and women;
All We thank you, Lord.

Reader For all creatures that breathe, and move, and have life;
All We thank you, Lord.

Reader For the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers and trees;
All We thank you, Lord.

Reader For the trust you have shown in giving into our care these, our pets;
All We thank you, Lord.

Reader That each pet here may be treasured with care; **We pray to you, Lord.**

All We pray to you, Lord.

Reader That we may love and honour all your works, O God;
All We pray to you, Lord.

Reader That we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment and protection of your abundant creation;
All We pray to you, Lord.

Reader To the honour and glory of your name, now and forever,
All We pray to you, Lord.

Lord's Prayer

After the Lord's Prayer, the leader invites all to hold or place their hands on their animals in 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 know our care, and that your generosity 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. R. Amen.

At this point the pets and their owners can be sprinkled with holy water.

All then make the sign of the cross as the leader concludes:

May God, who created the animals of this earth, continue to protect and sustain us with his grace. And may the blessing of almighty God come down upon you...+

R. Amen.

The blessing may conclude with a song such as "The Old Hundred" (Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow), "All Creatures of Our God and King."

Prayer Source: **Based** on *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* by Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, NCCB/USCC, 1989