



*Blessing
of the
Animals*



Catholic Climate Covenant™
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

**Befriend the Wolf:
Blessing All God's Creation**

FACILITATOR GUIDE

This is the Blessing of the Animals prepared to be used in conjunction with, or separately from, of the 2017 Feast of St. Francis Program, [Befriending the Wolf: A Blessing for All Creation](#).

Note: "Leader" can be a Priest, Deacon, or Lay Leader

Directions:

Encourage/invite all participants to bring an animal, perhaps a beloved pet, to the worship. People who are not able to bring an animal may wish to bring a picture of an animal they love or a photo of an endangered species in the wild.

It is important to be sensitive to the needs of those who are grieving for their animal companions. Invite people to also bring photographs of their deceased, beloved animal companions to the service.

Setting: This liturgy is best performed outside, in a park or a public garden where it is lush and inviting. Space is needed between many of the animals to provide a comfortable context. Of course, plan where you would need to hold the liturgy if weather doesn't permit being outdoors.

Remind all that animals must be on a lead or in a secure pet carrier for the safety of other animals. Most cities will give permission to use a park provided certain conditions are met. Banners with animals on them may also be used.

You may wish to reach out to animal welfare groups in the community and invite them to participate.

Optional: Readings for Blessing of the Animals: you may want to have a CD of bird/animal sounds playing during the readings.

Take up an offering which could go towards an animal cause or as a donation to a local animal shelter. Donations of dog and cat food, advertised several weeks' prior, could be placed in a basket at the door of the church/worship space and brought forward as part of the offering

You could have "doggy bags" made up, or a plate with dog treats: invite the owner to take one for their animal companion.

We encourage you to have the St Francis/*Laudato Si'* pledge available for people to sign.

Feel free to modify/adapt to your needs and the needs of your community!

Note- Resources to help prepare for optional sermon/reflection:

1. Saint Francis and the Wolf, <http://tamingthewolf.com/saint-francis-and-the-wolf/>
2. Saint Francis and the Taming of the Wolf <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-francis-and-the-taming-of-the-wolf/>
3. Catholic Climate Covenant FOSF 2017 [video](#)

This liturgy has been compiled and adapted from a liturgy written by Barbara Allen, Chaplain, Lort Smith Animal Hospital and FrancisCorps' Blessing of Animals.

Barbara Allen link: <http://seasonofcreation.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/liturgy-usa-blessing-of-animals-sunday-2.pdf>

Blessing of the Animals Liturgy

Befriend the Wolf: Blessing All God's Creation

OCTOBER 4TH: FEAST DAY OF ST FRANCIS; WORLD ANIMAL DAY

 script of what you might say to your group  facilitator/prayer leader instructions

 Have the group form a circle

Leader:  Welcome! We join in worship today with all our brothers and sisters of creation. We join the Psalmists and rejoice with all living things, to give thanks to God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, of all things visible and invisible. We sing with all creatures of the earth that make our lives richer because of their presence. We sing with all God's beautiful creation.

Call to Worship

L: "But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
...and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
In his hand is the life of every living thing..." (Job 12: 7, 8b, 10a)

P: Amen

Hymn: Morning has Broken or All Things Bright and Beautiful

Opening Prayer/Processional

L: Come, let us gather together.

P: Let us join the gathering: we bring fish and birds.

L: Come, all is ready for all of creation.

P: Let us join the gathering: we bring turtles, dogs, and cats.

L: Come let us praise our Creator.

P: We are loved: we bring all flora, fauna, and all the glory of God's creation.

L: Come, with all creation.

As we gather, we are mindful that, as part of God's creation, we wish the best for one another, and for all that God called good.

Within this faith community we express this in prayer and through blessing.

Let us pass God's blessing among one another:

Peace be with you!

P: And with your spirit.

[passing of the peace, extending to the animals as well]

“Canticle of the Creatures” by St. Francis of Assisi

Everyone read together:

Most High, all powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing. To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no one is worthy to mention Your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praise be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains us and governs us and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin.

Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.

Amen

Readings for Blessing of the Animals:

Old Testament

Reader: A Reading from Genesis 1: “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. And God blessed them. 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. And God saw

that it was good. Then God said, 'Let us make humankind.' And God blessed them. God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good."

Circle of Praise - A Version of Psalm 148

P: Praise the Lord!

L: All rabbits, hamsters, and guinea pigs:

P: Praise the Lord!

L: All creatures of the waters, the goldfish, guppies, and swimming creatures:

P: Praise the Lord!

L: All of the winged ones, robins, wrens, and singing birds:

P: Praise the Lord!

L: All bats, squirrels, and raccoons:

P: Praise the Lord!

L: All horses, cows, wolves, and sheep:

P: Praise the Lord!

L: All lizards, snakes, cockroaches, and creeping things:

P: Praise the Lord!

L: Every animal in the sky, the sea, and the forest:

P: Praise the Lord!

Gospel: (Matthew 6: 25-26)

Reader: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?"

This is the word of the Lord.

P: Thanks be to God.

Reading from a Sermon of St Francis:

"Peace, birds, peace!

My brother and sister birds, you should greatly praise your Creator and love him always. He gave you feathers to wear, and wings to fly, and whatever you need. God made you noble among his creatures and gave you a home in the purity of the air, so that, though you do not sow nor reap, he nevertheless protects and governs you without your least care."

Sermon or Reflection (optional...see *note)

Hymn: *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace*

Offering Prayer

L: God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our deep thanks for all the animals and other creatures that have enriched our lives.

P. With all animals around the throne, we bless the Lamb of God.

Circle of Blessing

All worshippers with animals or photos of animals now come forth and form another circle, each person placing a hand on the animal being held. The leader then moves to each animal, saying its name, holding a hand over the animal, and blessing it in the name of the Christ who fills and heals creation.

Blessing: the leader circulates through the congregation, asks the name of the animal, places his hand on the animal's head (if appropriate) and then blesses the animal:

Leader: *"Blessed are you, Lord God, maker of all living creatures. You called forth fish in the sea, birds in the air and animals on the land. You inspired Saint Francis to call all of them his brothers and sisters. We ask you to bless this beloved creature. By the power of your love, enable it to live according to your plan. May we always praise you for all your beauty in creation. Blessed are you, Lord our God, in all your creatures! Amen."*

As the prayer is offered, the pet is gently sprinkled with holy water.

[If a person has brought a photograph of their pet rather than the animal itself, then bless the owner, and have them pass on this blessing when they return home]

Remembrance of those Who Have Died

At this point in the service, bring the photographs forward and place them on a table or bench which has been set up for this purpose. Have a basket of rosemary sprigs next to the table (optional) for them to take as they return to their seats.

L: We remember our animal companions who are no longer with us physically. We give thanks for the gifts they gave us and the variety of ways they enriched and blessed our lives.

We are confident that our Creator continues to care for them.

P: Amen

Prayer of Intercession

Leader: Loving God,

We bring to You the prayers of the people.

Today we offer up prayers for the people dedicating their lives to the welfare of animals and the ecosystems in which they live. For farmers and veterinarians, that they may always be guided by You to treat the animals in the care with dignity and respect.

We pray for those who are working at policy and project levels, and for those tending to the needs of all of creation which is threatened by climate change and environmental destruction.

We pray for all to see the interconnectedness of creation, that we may mend the brokenness that has led to exploitation and even extinction, of some of Your Creation.

Help us to be like St Francis, that our hearts may be open to the wonder of all your creation, even fearsome wolves.

We pray for peace between us and all our brothers and sisters in creation.

Enable us, and all of creation to sense your presence, of our Oneness with You.

Lord's Prayer

Sending Out

L: Christ calls you to be his disciples, to serve him with love and compassion, to serve our common home, the Earth, by caring for all creation.

Will you, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, care for creation?

P: Guided by the Holy Spirit, we will care for creation and all the world's vulnerable people!

We will nurture our pets and all animal kin!

We will celebrate the circle of life with them!

Blessing

L: May the Holy Spirit fill you with the knowledge of God's presence on Earth and the presence of Christ within you. Go in peace! Serving Christ and loving all creatures!

P: We go in peace, serving Christ, loving our brothers and sisters in all of creation.

Processional/Closing Hymn *Let the Heavens be Glad or Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*



[invite the people with their animals to process out first, followed by rest of community]