



**STRENGTH
ACTIVITY**

FRANCIS & FRIENDS

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

written by Carol Peterson

Activity Instructions

October 4 of each year is the Feast of St. Francis. Many people choose to celebrate this is by conducting a Blessing of Animals service. This is a great activity you can do as a family, as a faith community or as an event open to your larger community.

Explain to the child/children how much Francis loved all of creation and especially the animals. Explain that many people choose to honor St. Francis by commemorating his special day with a Blessing of Animals service.

Plan your activity: what day/time, location (outdoors), advertising (if any), what supplies you need, what service liturgy you want to use (see attached sample template). You may also want to provide a certificate to be handed out where each pet's name can be written.

At your event, consider collecting donation for your local animal shelter (i.e. pet food, old towels, money, etc).

After you have conducted your Blessing select one or more of the discussion questions below to explore the experience with the child/children.

Genesis 1:31

"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good."

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think the animals know they were being blessed?
2. Why is it a good thing to do even if the animals didn't know?
3. Are there any animals you don't like? Why?
4. Do you think God loves all animals?
5. How did it make you feel to take a donation to the animal shelter?

Supply List

An appropriate outdoor space.

A bowl filled with water.

An evergreen branch to use to sprinkle the water.

Leaflets with the order of service, songs, etc.

A table, box, can, etc. to collect donations.



Prayer

Lord God, We thank you for all your creation, especially the animals that you give us as our pets. Please help us to care for them as you care for us.

Amen

Sample Liturgy for Blessing of Animals at the Feast of St. Francis October 4th

Opening Prayer

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray. Lord God you created us, these pets, and all the other creatures of this world. We thank you for the many ways that animals are a blessing to us in our daily lives. We especially thank you for these pets here today. Thank you for their companionship. Help us to care for them as you care for us. In Jesus' name we pray ...

People: Amen

Scripture Readings

Genesis 1:24-25

Reader: 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.

The word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

(a brief reflection on the importance of animals in our lives may be inserted here)

Prayers

Leader: For all your creatures that live and move and enrich our lives,

People: We pray to you, Lord.

Leader: That we may be faithful caretakers of all your creation,

People: We pray to you, Lord.

Leader: That each pet here may be blessed, cared for and loved,

People: We pray to you, Lord.

Leader: That by caring for your creation we honor and glorify your name,

People: We pray to you, Lord.

Leader: Most high, all-powerful, good Lord, yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessings. Be praised my Lord, through all your creatures. Praise and bless the Lord and give thanks and serve our Creator with all humility. (*Adapted from the Canticle of the Creatures*)

People: Amen

Song

(A brief song may be inserted here such as "All Things Bright and Beautiful" – Public Domain)

Prayer of St. Francis

Leader: Praying together the Prayer attributed to St. Francis

**People: Lord make us instruments of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let us sow love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
Where there is sadness, joy.**

**O Divine Master,
Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
To be understood a to understand;
To be loved as to love.**

**For it is in giving that we receive'
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.**

Blessing of the Animals

Animals are brought forth one by one to receive a Blessing. You can either bless them by laying hands on them, making the sign of the cross over them, or sprinkling them with an evergreen branch dipped in water.

After the Blessing each owner may receive a certificate with date, leader/minister's signature, and a space the animal's name can be written.

Be sure to take lots of pictures to share with others!