

Service of Blessing for Animals

Words to be said are in this style: **All:** say these words.

Instructions are in italics.

This service may be taken by those in Minor Orders. This service may be taken at any time however the nearest Sunday to St Francis feast day October 4th is observed as Animal Welfare Sunday; this service is intended for this as well as for general use. A large room where the people and animals may form a circle is to be preferred. If a church with fixed pews, adapt this service according to circumstances. Some people may bring caged birds or small caged pets; arrangements for tables and spaces for these should be provided when arranging and setting up the room. Drinking water bowls for the animals should be provided. This service may be held outdoors. When most animals and their friends have arrived, the leader invites all to form a large circle.

Leader: Let us worship God together...

Leader: 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 gifts on all living things, has often used the service of animals or made them reminders of the gifts of salvation. Animals were saved from the flood and afterwards made a part of the covenant with Noah. The paschal lamb recalls the Passover sacrifice and the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. A giant fish saved Jonah; ravens brought bread to Elijah; animals were included in the repentance of Nineveh; and animals share in Christ's redemption of all God's creation. We, therefore, invoke God's blessing on these animals. As we do so, let us praise and thank God for setting us as stewards over all the creatures of the earth.

All: Amen.

*This, or another Hymn may be sung:
For the Beauty of the Earth F.S Pierpoint (1835-1917)*

Leader: Let us hear God's word:
*Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 11: 6-9
It is to be preferred that one of the congregation read this scripture.*

*This, or another Hymn may be sung:
Morning has broken Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965)*

Leader: Let us hear God's word in this Psalm:
*It is to be preferred if this Psalm can be read by a group with 6 voices or 3 people with 2 sections each. Otherwise the Psalm should be read as appropriate to the circumstances.
Psalm 148:1-5, 7-13*

Prayers

The following, or St. Francis' Prayer for All Created Things, or another prayer may be prayed.

Leader: Let us pray...

Leader: God created us and placed us on the earth to be stewards of all living things, therefore let us proclaim the glory of our Creator, saying:

All: O God, how wonderful are the works of your hands.

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe; you create the animals and give us the ability to train them to help us in our work.

All: O God, how wonderful are the works of your hands.

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe; you give us & animals food to replenish our energies.

All: O God, how wonderful are the works of your hands.

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe; for the sake of our comfort you give us domestic animals as companions.

All: O God, how wonderful are the works of your hands.

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe; you care for us even as you care for the birds of the air.

All: O God, how wonderful are the works of your hands.

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe; you offered your Son to us as the Passover lamb and in Him willed that we should be called your children.

All: O God, how wonderful are the works of your hands. Amen.

Gospel Reading

The Leader takes the Gospel Reading. This may be devolved to a suitable member of the congregation if desired.

Reader: Let us hear the Gospel of Christ.

John 10:11-16 or another suitable reading is given.

Reader: This is the word of our Lord, thanks be to God.

All: Amen.

Homily

The Leader, or someone appointed by them gives a homily. Mention should be made of how we will know that God's Kingdom has come when all the animals return to their loving and inclusive relationships with each other.

Mass or Informal Communion can be shared here. A piece of bread (or small piece of wafer) may be given to each animal if appropriate.

Prayers of Blessing

The leader or another says the following prayer with hands outstretched and may touch and bless each animal and person present. The people with their animals form a procession to be blessed.

Leader: Bless, O Lord, this (these) creature(s), and fill our hearts with thanksgiving for its (their) being. Bless too, the person that cares for and brings this animal before you.

Carer on behalf of the animal: Amen

Hymn

*This, or another Hymn may be sung:
The Good Shepherd (hymnal.net)*

Blessing

Leader: May our Lord God, who created the animals of this earth in beauty and with divine instinct, help us to see how we can learn from these creatures, help us to recognise that we are just creatures too and to be humble as they are. Continue merciful God to protect, love and sustain us all, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

END of service

Please pray for yourselves, the animals in your care and the Old Catholic Apostolic Church regularly.