



Blessing of the Animals

October 4, 2026 | Genesis 1:20-25, Matthew 6:26

In Genesis Chapter 1 we find these verses:

“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 there was 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.” (Genesis 1:20-25)

Today we gather to mark and celebrate the blessing of the animals. What the passage from Genesis is reminding us, is that all living creatures are created by God and God views them as good.

Saint Francis of Assisi, whose feast day of October 4 anchors our celebration, went a step even farther, viewing all creation as being children of God. He urged birds, animals, fish and even the sun and moon to join in praising God.

You can see this in the hymn “All Creatures, Worship God Most High” (ELW 835), whose words are taken from Saint Francis’s Canticle of the Sun.

In the last verse it reads, along with seven 'alleluias:' **“O sisters, brothers take your part, and worship God with humble heart! All creatures, bless the Father, Son, and Holy spirit, three in One!”**

The message of Saint Francis resonates with what we have learned from our Indigenous siblings. In Indigenous theological teachings, the concept “all my relations” refers to the interconnectedness of all living things, everything in creation under the sun.

In the Sermon on the Mount, we find the following: **“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.”** (Matthew 6:26a) Jesus is saying that God loves and cares for all living creatures.

Usually at the blessing of the animals, we see household pets: dogs, cats, gerbils, parrots and even fish. Sometimes we see working animals like service pets or guide dogs.

But as we bless these living creatures and the special places they have in our lives, we also bless all living creatures: elephants and lions, horses and cattle, dolphins and whales, even flies and bees.

Why? Because God created them and saw them as good. Because they are important parts of our living planet and various ecosystems. Because, besides companionship, they provide livelihoods, food, pollination, protection, and wonder at the diversity of God's creatures.

Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) knows all about the importance of animals. In their current programming they are caring for people while caring about goats, chickens, bees and fish.

These living creatures help provide livelihoods to marginalized people, help to provide food security to families and communities, and restore dignity and hope to people who had none.

Retired Bishop Susan Johnson tells the story of learning about CLWR and goats. She writes:

I am the third generation of a family who supports the work of CLWR. When they first came out with the ***Gifts from the Heart*** program, I thought it was a brilliant idea. I could buy gifts for those who were hard to buy for and support the work of CLWR at the same time. I would buy my dad goats because I thought it was funny — teasing him about being an old goat.

Then one day, I had the privilege of actually seeing the work of CLWR in the field. I met a woman who had been given a pair of goats as part of a CLWR sponsored project. Recipients were given a male and female goat.

The milk they got from the goats helped to feed their family and the rest could be sold at market. The promise the woman had made was that she would give the first two goats born from her goats to another recipient, to help them in the same way. I saw the pride she took in her increased independence and the hope she had now for herself and her family.

Suddenly goats were no longer a laughing matter. I realized that my father and I, through ***Gifts from the Heart***, were participating in life-changing work that was continually being paid forward! What an amazing gift!

Today as we bless the animals, let us remember the many ways that God's creatures bless us and many others around the world.

Let us give thanks for breeders, farmers, ranchers, veterinarians and all who work with and care for animals. Let us remember the life-giving work of Canadian Lutheran World Relief.

And let us, with all living creatures, give thanks and praise to God, the creator and sustainer of us all. **Amen.**