

# A Liturgy in Thanksgiving for Creation and in Honor of the Feast of St. Francis, with the Blessing of Animals

*An entrance hymn may be sung.*

*Presider* Blessed be the God of all creation.  
*People* And blessed be God's holy Name for ever and ever.

*or this*

*Presider* Blessed be God, Creator, Word and Spirit;  
*People* Who brings all things into being and calls them good.  
*Presider* Bless your Creator, all animals of the land.  
*People* Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.  
*Presider* Bless your Creator, all birds of the air.  
*People* Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.  
*Presider* Bless your Creator, all creatures of the sea.  
*People* Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.  
*Presider* Bless your Creator, all children of God.  
*People* Let us praise and exalt our Creator together.

*Presider* The Lord be with you.  
*People* And also with you.  
*Presider* Let us pray.  
Most high, omnipotent, good Lord: Grant your people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of this world; that, following the way of blessed Francis, we may for love of you delight in your whole creation with perfect joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## The Readings

*First Reading:* Psalm 104:10-25

You, LORD God, send the springs into the valleys; \*  
they flow between the mountains.  
All the beasts of the field drink their fill from them, \*  
and the wild asses quench their thirst.  
Beside them the birds of the air make their nests \*  
and sing among the branches.  
You water the mountains from your dwelling on high; \*  
the earth is fully satisfied by the fruit of your works.  
You make grass grow for flocks and herds \*  
and plants to serve humankind;  
That they may bring forth food from the earth, \*  
and wine to gladden our hearts,  
Oil to make a cheerful countenance, \*  
and bread to strengthen the heart.

The trees of the LORD are full of sap, \*  
the cedars of Lebanon which God planted,  
In which the birds build their nests, \*  
and in whose tops the stork makes a dwelling.  
The high hills are a refuge for the mountain goats, \*  
and the stony cliffs for the rock badgers.  
You appointed the moon to mark the seasons, \*  
and the sun knows the time of its setting.  
You make darkness that it may be night, \*  
in which all the beasts of the forest prowl.  
The lions roar after their prey \*  
and seek their food from God.  
The sun rises, and they slip away \*  
and lay themselves down in their dens.  
People go forth to their work \*  
and to their labor until the evening.  
O LORD, how manifold are your works! \*  
in wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

*A second Reading may be added here.*

## Prayers for God's Creation and God's Creatures

*The Prayers may be led by a Deacon or other Leader.*

*Deacon* God the Creator of all; that all your creatures may thank you  
and serve you,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to grant favorable weather, temperate  
rain, and fruitful seasons, providing food and drink for all your  
creatures,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to open our eyes to the joy and beauty  
of your creation, and to see your presence in all your works,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to look with favor upon all who care for  
the earth, the water, and the air so the riches of your creation  
may abound for all your creatures, from age to age,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to make us faithful stewards of your  
creation, caring for the earth, air, seas, and all the creatures who  
live in them,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to make us aware of our responsibility  
to all your creatures and to be faithful in caring for them,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to forgive our waste and pollution of  
your creation and to strengthen us to heal its wounds,

*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to remember all animals in captivity and those who are hunted, trapped, deserted, abused, or exploited, so that by our actions they may find safety and homes of loving care,  
*People* *We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.*

*Deacon* That it may please you to remember those animals who have died yet remain special or dear to us, that they may rejoice in the new creation of your kingdom.  
*People* We beseech you to hear us, good Lord.

*Presider* Let us name with thanksgiving those animals for whom we now care, who are at home: \_\_\_\_\_.  
Let us name with thanksgiving those animals who have companioned us over the years, and who have died: \_\_\_\_\_.  
And let us remember in silence the unnamed, unknown animals whose lives have benefited our own.

*Silence*

*Presider* Holy God: No sparrow falls without your attention; nothing dies that is lost to your remembrance; nothing exists that comes into being without your love. Give us just and compassionate hearts, that we may serve your will for creation, holding the vision of your peaceable reign in which all shall live with you eternally, through the Risen One, Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

## Confession of Sin

*The Confession may be omitted on occasion.*

*The Deacon or Presider says*

Let us confess to God our sins against our fellow creatures.

*Silence may be kept.*

*Minister and People*

God of compassion, have mercy upon us.  
Bring healing to our relationship with all your creation.  
Forgive us for our mistreatment and neglect  
of the creatures with whom we share your earth:  
for what we have done to harm them,  
and for what we have not done to help them.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
We ask you to fill us with your Spirit,  
that we may care for one another and for all your creatures,  
according to your will and in the fullness of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The Priest alone says*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

*If no Priest is present, the Presider uses the preceding form and substitutes "us" for "you" and "our" for "your."*

## The Blessing of the Animals

*Presider* It is the priestly work of all God's people to give thanks for God's blessings to us, to ask for and lend assistance for all in need, and to stretch our hands to heal and to cherish creatures of God; this is our work of blessing. Recognizing the blessing that these creatures are to us, I invite you to bring forward the animals entrusted to your care, one by one, and to join me in the laying on of hands and in prayer.

*The animals are blessed individually by name by the Presider, using these or other words*

Fellow creature, friend and companion:  
May God your creator and preserver  
bless, defend, heal, and keep you,  
this day and always. *Amen.*

*The Presider invites then the people to name aloud their animals at home and to pray together, using these words*

*All* Fellow creatures, friends and companions:  
May God your creator and preserver  
bless, defend, heal, and keep you,  
this day and always. *Amen.*

*Presider* Let us pray.  
God of manifold blessings, source of all that is good and true and holy: Raise us up to see the world through your eyes, so that with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we may treasure each creature alive with your Spirit and touched by your creative hand. And may the blessing of this bountiful God, who creates, redeems, and sanctifies, be upon us all, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*Or the animals may be blessed collectively, using this prayer*

*Presider* Almighty and everlasting God, Creator of all things and giver of all life: Let your blessing be upon these and all animals. May our relationships with them mirror your love, and may our care for them follow the example of your bountiful mercy. Grant these animals health and peace. Strengthen us to love and care for them as we strive, like God's servant Francis of Assisi, to imitate Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## The Lord's Prayer

*Presider* The Lord be with you.  
*People* And also with you.  
*Presider* Let us pray.

*Presider and People*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

*If desired, this Prayer attributed to St. Francis may also be said*

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.  
Grant that we may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as 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.

*The Presider may say this blessing from St. Clare*

*Presider* Live without fear: your Creator has made you holy, has always  
protected you, and loves you as a mother. Go in peace to follow  
the good road, and may God's blessing be with you always.  
*Amen.*

*A hymn may be sung.*

*The Deacon, or the Presider, dismisses them with these words*

*Deacon* Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
*People* Thanks be to God.

# Additional Readings and Resources for St. Francis Day

## Additional Readings

Genesis 1:20-22a, 24-26a, 28, 31a

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. 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. 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. Then God said, "Let us make humankind."... God blessed them....

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

Wisdom 11:24-12:1

For you love all things that exist,  
and detest none of the things that you have made,  
for you would not have made anything if you had hated it.  
How would anything have endured if you had not willed it?  
Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved?  
You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord,  
you who love the living.  
For your immortal spirit is in all things.

Job 12:7, 8b-10a

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.  
Who among all these does not know  
that the hand of the LORD has done this?  
In his hand is the life of every living thing.

Matthew 6:25-26

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will 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 of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Matthew 11:25-30

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am

gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

**Psalm 104:24-25, 27-28, 30-31**

O LORD, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.  
Yonder is the sea, great and wide,  
creeping things innumerable are there,  
living things both small and great....

These all look to you  
to give them their food in due season;  
when you give to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things....

When you send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground.  
May the glory of the LORD endure forever.

**Canticle 12 A Song of Creation** *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini*  
From *Enriching Our Worship 1*, page 26

*II. The Earth and Its Creatures*

Let the earth glorify the Lord, \*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.  
Glorify the Lord, O mountains and hills, and all that grows upon the earth, \*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.  
Glorify the Lord, O springs of water, seas, and streams, \*  
O whales and all that move in the waters.  
All birds of the air, glorify the Lord, \*  
sing praise and give honor for ever.  
Glorify the Lord, O beasts of the wild, \*  
and all you flocks and herds.  
O men and women everywhere, glorify the Lord, \*  
*sing praise and give honor for ever.*

**Additional Materials**

**A Prayer attributed to St. Basil**

Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship  
with all living things,  
our brothers and sisters the animals to whom you gave the earth  
as their home in common with us.

We remember with shame that in the past  
we have exercised the high dominion of humans  
with ruthless cruelty,  
so that the voice of the earth  
which should have gone up to you in song  
has been a groan of travail.

May we realize that they live, not for us alone,  
but for themselves, and for you,  
and that they love the sweetness of life.  
We pray through our Savior Jesus Christ  
who lifts up and redeems us all. *Amen.*

**A Reading from Meister Eckhart**

Apprehend God in all things,  
for God is in all things.  
Every single creature is full of God,  
and is a book about God.  
Every creature is a word of God.  
If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature—  
even a caterpillar—  
I would never have to prepare a sermon,  
so full of God  
is every creature.

**A Reading adapted from St. Isaac the Syrian**

This is a charitable heart: It is a heart burning with love for the whole creation, for humans, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons—for all creatures. One who has such a heart cannot see or call to mind a creature without having eyes being filled with tears by reason of the immense compassion which seizes the heart; a heart which is softened and can no longer bear to see or learn from others of any suffering, even the smallest pain, being inflicted on a creature. That is why such a person never ceases to pray also for the animals, that they may be preserved and purified. This person will even pray for the reptiles, moved by the infinite pity which reigns in the hearts of those who are becoming united with God.

**A Reading from *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky**

Love all God's creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand, love every leaf, every ray of God's light; love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in all things. And once you have perceived it, you will begin to comprehend it ceaselessly, more and more every day. And you will at last come to love the whole world with an abiding, universal love. Love the animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and untroubled joy. Do not, therefore, trouble it, do not torture them, do not deprive them of their joy, do not go against God's intent.