

11th October 2020 Pet Blessing Service

INTRODUCTION and WELCOME

Opening Acclamation:

**Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed;**

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

Karl Boberg trans Stuart K Hine

Call to worship:

Creator God,
we come together to thank you
for the fellowship of other creatures,
to celebrate their God-given lives,
and to pray for compassionate hearts
so we may care for them
and for all your creation
Let us worship God:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Prayer of Preparation:

Loving God, we have come to worship you.
**Help us to pray to you in faith,
to sing your praise with gratitude,
and to listen to your word with eagerness;**

through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Confession: We say sorry to God

God called us in the beginning to be stewards of His creation, caring for and nurturing the world He made. We give thanks for all creatures and say sorry for the things we have done wrong, or the good things we have failed to do.

Lord, for all the animals in the whole wide world,
We thank you, God!

Lord, for all the fun and friendship we have with animals,
We thank you, God!

Lord for all we have received from our animals
We thank you, God!

For the times we haven't appreciated the wonderful creation you have given us, and misused it
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the times we've have been careless or cruel to our animals
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

For the times we've been unkind, or not helped other people
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution:

God of everlasting love, full of mercy,
forgive us, and restore us,
make us one with you in your new creation,
through Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Hymn of Praise or Gloria

Think Of A World Without Any Flowers,
Think Of A World Without Any Trees,
Think Of A Sky Without Any Sunshine,
Think Of The Air Without Any Breeze.

**We Thank You, Lord, For Flowers And Trees And Sunshine,
We Thank You, Lord, And Praise Your Holy Name.**

Think Of The World Without Any Animals,
Think Of A Field Without Any Herd,
Think Of A Stream Without Any Fishes,
Think Of A Dawn Without Any Bird.

**We Thank You, Lord, For All Your Living Creatures,
We Thank You, Lord, And Praise Your Holy Name.**

Think Of A World Without Any People,
Think Of A Street With No-One Living There,
Think Of A Town Without Any Houses,
No-One To Love And Nobody To Care.

**We Thank You, Lord, For Families And Friendships,
We Thank You, Lord, And Praise Your Holy Name.**

Doreen Newport. CCLI SONG 5305599

Collect - *the special prayer of the day*

O God, you have made us
and all living things to be our family on earth.

We thank you for all of your creation
and especially for giving us people
and animals who bring us joy.

As you care for us, so may we care for one another,
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

The LITURGY of the WORD 1st Reading: Psalm 104:10-25

The Lord... makes springs pour water into the ravines;
it flows between the mountains.

11 They give water to all the beasts of the field;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

12 The birds of the sky nest by the waters;
they sing among the branches.

13 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.

14 He makes grass grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to cultivate—
bringing forth food from the earth:

15 wine that gladdens human hearts,
oil to make their faces shine,
and bread that sustains their hearts.

16 The trees of the Lord are well watered,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

17 There the birds make their nests;
the stork has its home in the junipers.

18 The high mountains belong to the wild goats;
the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.

19 He made the moon to mark the seasons,
and the sun knows when to go down.

20 You bring darkness, it becomes night,
and all the beasts of the forest prowl.

21 The lions roar for their prey
and seek their food from God.

22 The sun rises, and they steal away;
they return and lie down in their dens.

23 Then people go out to their work,
to their labour until evening.

24 How many are your works, Lord!

In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

25 There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number—
living things both large and small.

Response

**All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.**

**God gave us eyes to see them,
and lips that we might tell
how great is God Almighty,
who has made all things well.**

Cecil F. Alexander, 1818-1895, alt.

2nd Reading Isaiah's Vision of God's Holy Mountain:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall feed;
their young shall lie down together,
and the lion shall eat straw like an ox.

The suckling child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child
shall put his hand on the adder's den.

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full
of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

(Isaiah 11.6-9, RSV)

Sermon

A couple of years ago, to Roni's horror, I praised Rats in our Pet Blessing service, not just any rats, but Hero Rats - the ones that clear minefields. A week ago Roni came across news of an extraordinary Hero rat. His name is Magawa, and like me, he was born in Tanzania. He's a five year old African Giant Pouched rat.

What is Magawa's claim to fame?

In just four years of his little life, Magawa - which means courage - has found an impressive 39 active landmines and 28 unexploded munitions in Cambodia. He's their best rat ever. Magawa can search a 200 square metre minefield in 20 minutes. This would take someone with a detector between one and four days. He's cleared the size of 20 football fields, saving hundreds of people from maiming and death in the process.

And last week he became the first rat ever to receive a gold medal award for *"life-saving bravery and devotion to duty"* in the field.

You couldn't have a bigger contrast could you? A mine, a modern, highly technical war machine purposely designed to kill and maim humans, produced by the military-industrial complex powers that be, and a tiny, playful, cuddly even, rat, a rat produced naturally and simply from Nature - God's creation, and trained with human ingenuity.

Which is more powerful? The mine, or the rat that can find it? Which is hellishly evil, and which is heavenly good? Which better shows us God's purpose and redeeming love? Such is

the way of the Kingdom of God ushered in by Jesus. He turns the world and its might upside down in favour of the small, the poor, the simple, and the weak. Would the inventors and layers of mines ever have imagined that their work would be undone by rats?

*How many are your works, Lord!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.*

Many of us in the time of Lockdown have rediscovered the beauty of nature, or appreciated it anew. I prefer to call it Creation actually. When we look up at the stars or look down at a tiny bee, when we truly enjoy creation, we feel in our element, peaceful, refreshed and restored, and researchers tell us it does wonders for our mental health.

But I'd like to suggest natural creation does more - it reveals something of the One who made it, it tells us something about God.

[And by the way, I think there needs to be a shift in our thinking, a shift away from the simple story of Evolution we probably were taught at school. Through that lens, as it were, we were led to believe that God, (if He even existed) somehow set up some sort of natural process of things evolving, and left it to work itself out, while He observed the universe from a distance, uninvolved. For now, I quote St Paul who referenced the Greek poet Aratus from 245BC in Acts 17:28, *For in him we live and move and have our being.*'[a] *As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'*

There is a limit to which we can draw on the natural world for information about God. And a flawed evolutionary process which relies for its working on the cruelty of *'survival of the fittest'* tells us more about the presence of evil in natural processes than it does about goodness and God. The ancient story of Adam and Eve and the origin of evil begins to make sense. The reality is far more complex and exciting, and scripture promises this flawed natural world will one day be overthrown, when *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb etc*, but that's for another day.]

So Creation reveals something of the One who made it. And last week, I was reminded of this during Compline Night Prayer - watch this clip where Milo suddenly slumps sideways into complete rest exactly as Roni says: *'Be present O merciful God... so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world may rest upon your eternal changelessness...'*

We who enjoy the undeserved and unconditional affection of our animals celebrate them today and give thanks for them. They rely on us for their shelter, food and care and in return they give us so much.

So what are we to make of what they and creation speak to us? I think the clip of Milo says it all really.

Listen to these words of Jesus:

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life...Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ...and he goes on to

*say: But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.*

Yes, let our animals encourage us to seek first the Kingdom of God, to look for Jesus and to trust Him completely, unconditionally as many of our animals 'trust' us.

As we give thanks for them today and bless them, take courage, turn to Him who is your Master, acknowledge Him first in your life, let go of being anxious about anything as you pursue Him. Seek first the Kingdom of God. Amen

Response:

**O God, your creatures fill the earth
with wonder and delight,
And every living thing has worth
and beauty in your sight.
So playful dolphins dance and swim;
Your sheep bow down and graze.
Your songbirds share a morning hymn
To offer you their praise.**

**You made the pets we welcome in —
They're wondrous blessings, too.
With paws and whiskers, wings and fins,
They offer praise to you.
O Lord, you call us to embrace
These creatures in our care.
May we show kindness,
love and grace To all pets everywhere.**

Your creatures live in every land;

**They fill the sky and sea.
O Lord, you give us your command
To love them tenderly.
We're called to have dominion here —
To care for them always.
By loving creatures you hold dear,
We offer you our praise.**

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette - used with permission

Affirmation of Faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession - Prepared and led for us by Jenny
Dann, Reader at St Michael and All Angels, Shefford**

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in faith. We bring to you our prayers and thanksgivings for your creation and for ourselves.

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing Alleluia, alleluia.

As we rejoice in the intricacy and diversity of your creation, we give thanks especially for all the animals with whom we share our planet and our lives. Give us grace to see them as gifts from you, and to treat them with the care and respect they deserve. Help us to care for our pets and animals and look after them well.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for all animals who are suffering, overworked, underfed or cruelly treated. Lord, give us hearts of compassion, gentle hands and kindly words, and make us true friends to animals. Give us also the will to take action to protect animals from neglect and abuse.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Dear mother earth, who day by day
unfoldest blessings on our way, O praise him, alleluia.

Lord, you intended that human beings should live in harmony with all your creation: we acknowledge that by our own fault we have spoilt the beautiful relationship we once had with our mother earth. Forgive us, and help us to see that by restoring our relationship with you, we will also restore it with your creation, and make a better world.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We thank you, Lord, for all the individuals and organisations who seek to promote better care for the environment and the responsible use of resources. Give to those in power a willingness to listen, and the wisdom to make right decisions for the welfare of people and animals.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

And all you of tender heart,
forgiving others, take your part.

Gracious God, we ask for your presence among all whom we know and love: our community, our families and friends, our neighbours, our churches. We think especially of those from whom we are separated by the present crisis. Give us grace to serve Christ in one another, and to love as he loves us.

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

You who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God and on him cast your care.

Lord, we are mindful of the many gifts, including animals, with which you bless our lives. Help us also to be a gift to people who are in need. We pray to you for all who are suffering in mind, body or spirit; all who are sick or troubled; and all who grieve.

May our prayers and support be a blessing to them.

Let's pause to remember those on our hearts today.....

(pause)

Lord, in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness. Alleluia, alleluia.

Merciful Father, Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

**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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Birthdays and Notices

Creator God you have made us and all living things. Thank you for giving us the creatures which fill your world. May we think of you and thank you when we care for or play with our pets and animals. Thank you for the happiness our pets give us. We ask you to help us always be good to our pets and take care of our animals so that they may be happy and healthy **Amen.**

Pets: You were created by God, and you are loved by God. May you and your human family experience joy and companionship together, and continue to be a blessing to each other. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, **Amen.'**

May Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless these animals, protect them from all thoughtlessness and cruelty, that with all creation they may praise and exalt Him for ever.

Amen.

Almighty God, thank you for the gift of pets we have loved and lost, that we entrust now to you. Please help us cope with their loss with strength and courage, through Jesus Christ Our Lord **Amen**

Final Prayer

Blessed are you, Lord God, for all living creation and all creatures you have made. You keep them in your care and not one is lost without your knowing (Matthew 10:29). This world glorifies you and speaks to us of your beauty and love - teach us to respect it. May we learn to cherish all creatures for they are your gift to us and through them may we come to know you better and praise you, their Creator. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The BLESSING

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you
and give you peace;
and the blessing of God almighty the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you,
and all whom you love,
this day and always.

Amen

Final acclamation

All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing
Alleluia, Alleluia

Thou burning sun with golden beam

Thou silver moon with softer gleam

O praise Him, O praise Him

Together: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

Let all things their Creator bless
And worship Him in humbleness
Alleluia, Alleluia

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son

And praise the Spirit, three in one

O praise Him, O praise Him

Together: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

William Henry Draper

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Animals

A-Z

One for each letter?

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

Iguana

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Quail

R

S

T

Umbrellabird

V

W

Xerus (African Ground Squirrels)

Y

Z



My Animal Prayer