



*Until one has loved an animal a part of one's soul remains unawakened.*  
— Anatole France

## Blessing of the Animals Milestone Moment

Christians around the world celebrate a ritual that St. Francis of Assisi started almost 800 years ago by blessing animals. It was Francis who introduced the idea that human beings are only one of God's many creations, but that all, including animals, are blessed by God. He was born in Italy around 1181 and is considered the Patron Saint of animals and the natural environment.

Every year, around October 4th, many congregations have a special liturgy called the "Blessing of the Animals." People are asked to bring their pet animals for a blessing on this day. The service includes prayers for creation and a blessing of the animals.

This Blessing of the Animals Milestone Moment brings family and friends together to mark a special time in their lives and to acknowledge and affirm God's presence in their midst. The love between a person and their pet is like no other and the opportunity to recognize this special relationship is embraced by all ages.

An excerpt from the Prayer of Saint Francis for Animals:

*God Our Heavenly Father, You created the world to serve humanity's needs and to lead them to You. By our own fault we have lost the beautiful relationship which we once had with all your creation. Help us to see that by restoring our relationship with You we will also restore it with all Your creation. Give us the grace to see all animals as gifts from You and to treat them with respect for they are Your creation.*

Opportunities for families to gather in the home to celebrate God's gift of animals are special and an important step along our faith journey. Milestones Ministry uses a simple five stage structure that includes naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing so that the Milestone Moment will have a greater chance to take deeper root in one's lifelong faith formation.

**Naming** – It is good to remember God's creation of the animals of the air, sea, and land each year and recognize St. Francis of Assisi's role as Patron Saint of animals and the natural environment.

**Equipping** – This Milestone Moment encourages caring conversations that connect our faith while participating in the yearly blessing of the animals that includes our own pets who provide us with love and companionship throughout the year.

**Blessing** – Blessing the animals, whether in a faith community setting or our home reminds us of God's creation. And it was good!

**Gifting** – Giving a tangible gift like a special treat to a pet and taking a picture of the pet to place in a frame and display in your home is a good way to remember this event.

**Reinforcing** – It is a good idea to follow up after the day of blessing your pet with continued check-in and conversations about how the pet's health and care are maintained in your home. Talk about the responsibilities for cleaning up after, feeding, and exercising your pet/s.

 Caring Conversations
  Devotions
  Four Key Faith Practices
  Service
  Rituals and Traditions



# + Blessing of the Animals Milestone Moment

*For a Small Group or Family Gathering*



## Growing People in Faith when at Home and Away

*“and talk about them when you are at home and when away, when you lie down and when you rise.”*

– Deuteronomy 6:7b

*A follow up for the Blessing of the Animals Milestone Moment can be done with caring conversations to discuss care of animals and finding out more about endangered species and ways to support the work being done to save them. Gather together as a group to pray and reflect upon God’s presence in our lives and creation in the midst of this conversation about caring for and saving animals.*

*An important step after experiencing the Four Key Faith Practices in the small groups or home setting is to bless and equip friends and families to continue practicing faith by using the faith practices daily as an intentional step to encourage faith traditions in the home.*

*A suggested resource for continued caring conversations:*

[Taking Faith Home](#)  
[Taking Faith Home Cards](#)

*Additional Milestone Modules and Moments can be found at:*  
[www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)



At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Key Faith Practices: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions. They provide an opportunity for people to learn, experience, and grow in their faith together. The next page is a discussion guide handout to assist with the conversations.

As you gather together, begin by sharing a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your lives and then use the outline below to talk about faith and God’s gift of animals and pets.



### Caring Conversations

Discuss these thoughts and questions:

- If you could have any animal for a pet, which would you choose? Why?
- Name an animal that you or someone you know has as a pet. Tell a favorite story about that pet.
- Describe an animal in God’s creation that surprises you the most.



### Devotions

Read the following:

*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 1:24-25 (NRSV)

- God created the animals of the air, the sea, and the land. God proclaimed them all to be good. Do you think all animals are good? Why or why not?
- How does knowing God created all animals affect the way you care for and think about your pet?

Suggested Song: *All Things Bright and Beautiful*



### Service

Animal shelters provide shelter, food, and medical care for homeless animals. Many are in need of donations to continue this support. Find out more about an animal shelter where you live and make a donation.



### Rituals and Traditions

Gather around your pet/s and read this blessing:

*Dear God, creator of all animals in the air, in the sea, and on the land, we ask for a blessing on our pets and all animals, especially those who are homeless or lost or failing in their health. We are thankful for (name your pet/s) and grateful for the love and joy they bring to our lives. Bless our pet/s with a happy life and all that is good. Amen.*

End your time together by giving your pet/s a special treat.



*Until one has loved an animal a part of one's soul remains unawakened.*  
— Anatole France

# Blessing of the Animals Discussion Guide



Begin by sharing a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your lives and then use the outline below to talk about faith and God's gift of animals and pets.



## Caring Conversations

Discuss these thoughts and questions:

- If you could have any animal for a pet, which would you choose? Why?
- Name an animal that you or someone you know has as a pet. Tell a favorite story about that pet.
- Describe an animal in God's creation that surprises you the most.



## Devotions

Read the following:

*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 1:24-25 (NRSV)*

- God created the animals of the air, the sea, and the land. God proclaimed them all to be good. Do you think all animals are good? Why or why not?
- How does knowing God created all animals affect the way you care for and think about your pet?

Suggested Song: *All Things Bright and Beautiful*



## Service

Animal shelters provide shelter, food, and medical care for homeless animals. Many are in need of donations to continue this support. Find out more about an animal shelter where you live and make a donation.



## Rituals and Traditions

Gather around your pet/s and read this blessing:

*Dear God, creator of all animals in the air, in the sea, and on the land, we ask for a blessing on our pets and all animals, especially those who are homeless or lost or failing in their health. We are thankful for (name your pet/s) and grateful for the love and joy they bring to our lives. Bless our pet/s with a happy life and all that is good. Amen.*

End your time together by giving your pet/s a special treat.