

Blessing of Animals

Each year during the Mission's Annual Fiesta, we honor the Franciscan tradition of blessing our animals. To some, this might seem to be frivolous but the custom is rooted in history and dates back to the 1200's when St. Francis wrote a *Canticle of the Creatures*, a poetic devotion to all things created by God. Throughout the world, people being invited to bring their pets to the churches to be blessed by the Pastor and gently sprinkled with holy water mark this tradition.

Mission San Diego has welcomed cats, dogs, birds, snakes, fish, gerbils to name a few species but always it is with the pets appearing to behave perfectly almost as if knowing that this is a special day for them. There are several prayers associated with this tradition and a favorite Franciscan one is *"Blessed are you, Lord God, maker of all living creatures. You called forth fish in the sea, birds in the air and animals on the land. You inspired Saint Francis to call all of them his brothers and sisters. We ask you to bless this pet. By the power of your love, enable it to live according to your plan. May we always praise you for all your beauty in creation? Blessed are you, Lord our God, in all your creatures! Amen"*.

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