

CRIBB<S>NOTE - OCTOBER 5, 2008

Pets are amazing. As a small boy, I had a dog that followed me everywhere. She was my best friend. She seemed to understand everything I was going through. No matter what else was going on in the world, she gave me her undivided attention. We used to sit on the back porch of my family home and entertain each other. I would talk to her and she diligently listened. She did not demand a lot. Just rubbing her head or tickling her tummy seemed to be more than enough.

St. Francis of Assisi had a special love for animals. He apparently had no fear of any creature. He dedicated his life to their well-being. Animals were special gifts from God, and he cared for every animal, including birds, he encountered. It is in his honor that we offer a special sacrament of “blessing the pets.”

This is the second year we have provided a time for people and their pets to come to the church for the express purpose of having their animal companions prayed for and blessed. Last year the children of the church administered the blessings.

We watched cats and dogs of all sizes come into the church parking lot with their people and receive a gentle, loving touch. Some of the people actually wept as their pets were treated to a sacred session of personalized attention. In the moment of blessing there was a kind of spiritual symbolism of three presences: the children, the pets, and the people. Each one experienced a unique attachment to God and each other. Every visit was different and all were remarkable.

The faces of Faith and Peter Van Horsen, children who are quite familiar and comfortable with animals, brightened with great delight as they handled each animal and recited a prayer of healing and blessing. Baby Brandon Naylor came along with his parents and their two dogs. Robbie and baby Bennie Cunz were not left out as their dogs were blessed as well. Allen King helped out along Mika, Camille and Arthur Cribbs.

Jim and Susan Cook helped coordinate the “Blessing of the Pets” last year as they successfully attained the services of the Pasadena Humane Society to be our partner. Members of the congregation prepared lunch and helped set up stations to divide cats from dogs and other pets that came to be blessed.

What did God have in mind when life was realized in the beginning? How do we understand our responsibility to be stewards of the earth? In what ways do we honor God’s trust in us to take good care of Creation?

In a small way, our invitation to bring pets to the church for blessings is an effort to respond affirmatively to God’s expectation of our place in community with all creatures.

For the sake of integrity and clarity, you should know, I and my family don’t have any pets. My daughter Camille would love to correct that. She is the absolute animal lover among us. With the help of Susan Jakubowski Weiner, Camille has been able to work with special pets at the animal shelter. There is something very precious about her ability to touch a stray cat and share a depth of love that connects them as one. Camille is our guide and teacher when it comes to caring for animals.

Once a year, our congregation offers prayers for pets and their people. Everyone is invited to participate in a simple but meaningful act of demonstrating God’s love for all creatures. As God said in the beginning, so it is said now, “It is good.”