

Paws and Prayer? Episcopal Churches to Hold Blessing Ceremonies for Pets and Plushies

For some, pets are more than a furry friend; they really are family.

According to Yahoo News' The Oklahoman, a variety of Episcopalian churches are gearing up for a day of blessing pets and stuffed animals. These animal blessings are part of the day of St. Francis on Oct. 4, with many of the churches having "Blessing of the Animals" programs. For many, this includes cats, dogs and other critters. The participating churches ask that the pets are on leashes or inside of carriers, as well as being fully vaccinated.

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However, not only can people seek for their pets to get blessed. If congregants desire, some are allowing stuffed animals to get blessed as well. For example, as The Oklahoman noted, St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral is allowing, "children and the young at heart" to "bring stuffed animals to all services that day."

According to Patch, Blessing of the Animals celebratory events in Tampa, FL at St. Clement's Episcopal Church is allowing guests to bring, "...dogs, cats, pigs, hamsters [and] birds..." The pets are also set to receive St. Francis medals and a prayer booklet for pets.

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For years, believers have prayed over their pets, asking God to watch over them in times of sickness or loss. The question of whether animals go to heaven has also stirred conversation among Christians. While Scripture affirms that God deeply cares for all His creation, He has given mankind a unique role as image-bearers of God, possessing an eternal spirit that sets people apart from the rest of creation.

Blessing a child's toy may hold sentimental value, but believers must remember that such objects are not alive and cannot receive God's care the way living animals can. The risk is that well-meaning traditions could blur the lines between symbolic gestures and biblical truth.

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Ultimately, while our furry and feathered friends don't share in the eternal Spirit of God the way humans do, they remain a reminder of His creativity and kindness toward His children. It is us as the human race which alone has been created in God's image and given the greatest blessing of all: the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

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