Animals in Church

Biblical passages, historical sources, and prayers



petaqui.pt

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About this booklet

This booklet gathers biblical passages, historical sources, prayers, and examples from Christian tradition concerning compassion toward animals.

It is a documentary and educational work. Its aim is to help readers encounter sources faithfully, understand their historical setting, and reflect without polemics or pressure.

The booklet contains:

- an **introduction** to its scope, sources, and editorial choices;
- **biblical passages** from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, with context and notes;
- **witnesses from Christian tradition**: ten figures, from the desert of Egypt to colonial Peru, whose lives or legends record a close bond with animals;
- **prayers** from several Christian traditions that speak of animals;
- a short account of **dogs in service today**, which extends the historical thread into present-day practice;
- **further reading** and a full list of **references**.

0.1 How to read it

Chapters distinguish primary texts from editorial context. Quotations are marked as such, and each is followed by a citation; the full references are listed at the end. Where a story belongs to later legend rather than documented history, or where an attribution is uncertain, the text says so.

The chapters can be read in any order.

1 Introduction

Christian scripture and tradition say a great deal about animals: that they were made by God and called good, that God feeds them and remembers them, that people owe them rest and relief, and that some of the best-loved saints lived at peace with them. This booklet brings a selection of those sources together in one place, so that readers can meet them directly and in context.

1.1 Scope and terminology

The booklet is about *compassion toward animals*: care for their lives, their needs, and their suffering, as Christian sources describe it. It does not set out a theology of animals or argue for a particular ethical position; it presents texts and lets them speak.

"Animals" here means non-human animals, wild and domestic. Older English translations often use other words: "beast" for animals in general, "cattle" for livestock of any kind, "fowl" for birds. Notes explain these words where they appear.

The booklet distinguishes three kinds of material throughout:

- **source text**: scripture, early lives of the saints, prayers, and other texts quoted directly;
- **historical context**: when, where, and by whom a text was written, and what is documented about the people it describes;
- **editorial interpretation**: the booklet's own comments, kept short and marked as such.

1.2 Historical and denominational breadth

The sources range from the Hebrew Bible to the twentieth century. The witnesses include a desert monk of the fourth century, Irish and Northumbrian saints of the early Middle Ages, Francis of Assisi, a Dominican brother in colonial Lima, and a Russian hermit of the nineteenth century. The prayers come from Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, and Baptist sources.

No tradition is presented as the authority for the others, and none is criticized. Where traditions differ, the booklet describes rather than judges.

1.3 Translation and quotation policy

- **The Bible** is quoted from the King James Version of 1611, which is in the public domain in most of the world and remains one of the best-known English translations. Notes explain archaic words.
- **Other old texts** are quoted from public-domain translations, named in each citation. Where the booklet translates a text itself, it says "translation ours."
- **Modern translations still under copyright** are quoted only in short excerpts, credited to their source.
- **Omissions** within a quotation are marked with "…". Quotations are otherwise reproduced as published, including old spellings; only the old long "ſ" is printed as "s."

1.4 How sources were selected

A passage is included when animals appear in it as part of God's creation, as objects of God's care, or as beings toward whom people have obligations. The selection focuses on texts that speak of care for animals; it is not a complete survey of what Christian sources say about them. The laws on sacrifice and on clean and unclean animals, for example, belong to the same scriptures but are not treated here.

For the lives of the saints, the booklet prefers the earliest available account, ideally one written by someone who knew the saint or drew on those who did. It separates what is historically documented from what belongs to later tradition, and it marks uncertain dates and attributions. Factual statements are cited wherever possible, so that readers can check them.

2 Biblical Passages

This chapter gathers passages from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament in which animals appear as part of God's creation, as objects of God's care, or as beings toward whom people have obligations. It is a selection, not a complete survey: the many laws on sacrifice and on clean and unclean animals, for example, belong to the same scriptures but are not treated here.

All quotations follow the King James Version (KJV) of 1611, in the standard modern form of its text (*The King James Version of the Bible*, n.d.). Its English is four centuries old, so short notes explain words whose meaning has changed. Small superscript numbers mark verses. "LORD" in capitals is the KJV's convention for the Hebrew divine name.

2.1 Creation and covenant

Genesis 1:24–25, 29–31

> [24] And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. [25] And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. …
>
> [29] And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and

> every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. 31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

Context. The first creation account closes its sixth day by declaring the land animals "good" before humans are made, and then calling the whole of creation "very good." In this account, humans and animals alike are given plants to eat.

Notes. In the English of 1611, "meat" means food in general, not animal flesh.

Genesis 9:8–10, 15–16

> 8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 10 And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. …
>
> 15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

Context. After the flood, God's covenant is made not only with Noah's family but, in repeated words, with "every living creature."

2.2 The law: rest and relief

Exodus 23:12 and Deuteronomy 5:14

> Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.
>
> — Exodus 23:12

> But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.
>
> — Deuteronomy 5:14

Context. The weekly day of rest is extended explicitly to working animals. In Exodus 23:12, their rest is named first among the reasons for the sabbath.

Exodus 23:4–5

> [4] If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. [5] If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

Context. The duty to help an animal in distress holds even when it belongs to an enemy. Deuteronomy 22:4 gives the same rule for a neighbour's fallen ox or donkey.

Notes. The second verse is obscure in the KJV. Its sense is: even if you would rather leave him alone, you must help him raise the animal.

Deuteronomy 22:6–7

> 6 If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: 7 But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.

Context. The law permits taking the eggs or young but requires that the mother bird be let go. Its promised reward, "that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days," echoes the promise attached to the commandment to honour one's parents (Deuteronomy 5:16).

Notes. "Dam" means the mother bird.

Deuteronomy 25:4

> Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

Context. An ox treading grain on the threshing floor is to be left free to eat as it works.

Notes. "Corn" means grain in general.

2.3 Wisdom and psalms

Proverbs 12:10

> A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

Context. The proverb treats care for one's animals as a mark of righteousness, and contrasts it with the "mercies" of the wicked, which are cruel.

Notes. "Regardeth" translates a Hebrew verb that means "knows"; "life" translates *nephesh*, a word that can also mean "soul," "living being," or "desire." The righteous person knows what their animal needs.

Psalm 104:10–14, 24–25, 27–28

> [10] He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. [11] They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. [12] By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. [13] He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. [14] He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man …
>
> [24] O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. [25] So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. …
>
> [27] These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. [28] That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

Context. Psalm 104 is a hymn to God as creator and sustainer. Wild animals, birds, and sea creatures are described for their own sake, provided for directly by God, and not only in relation to human use.

Psalms 36:6 and 145:9, 15–16

> Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.
>
> — Psalm 36:6
>
> The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. … The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
>
> — Psalm 145:9, 15–16

Context. These psalms extend God's preserving care and "tender mercies" beyond humanity to "all his works" and "every living thing." Psalm 145:15–16 has long been used as a grace before meals.

Job 38:39–41 and 12:7–10

> [39] Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, [40] When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? [41] Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.
>
> — Job 38:39–41
>
> [7] But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: [8] Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of

> the sea shall declare unto thee. [9] Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? [10] In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.
>
> — Job 12:7–10

Context. When God finally answers Job (chapters 38–41), much of the reply is a tour of wild creatures that live beyond human control and use, yet within God's care. In the earlier passage, Job himself says that animals can teach people about God.

2.4 Stories and prophets

Numbers 22:28, 32–33

> [28] And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? …
>
> [32] And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: [33] And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

Context. The prophet Balaam beats his donkey three times because she will not go on, without seeing the angel blocking the road. The angel rebukes Balaam for the beating, and the donkey, who saw what he could not, is the one who saved his life.

Jonah 4:10–11

> [10] Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: [11] And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Context. These are the last words of the book of Jonah. Explaining why he spared Nineveh, God names its animals alongside its people.

Notes. "Sixscore thousand" is 120,000.

Hosea 2:18 and Isaiah 11:6–9

> And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.
>
> — Hosea 2:18

> [6] The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. [7] And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. [8] And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. [9] They shall not hurt nor 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

Context. Both prophets describe a future peace that includes the animal world. In Isaiah 11 it follows the promise of a just king from the line of David; Isaiah 65:25 repeats the image.

Notes. A "cockatrice" is a venomous snake.

2.5 Gospels and letters

Matthew 6:26

> Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Context. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus points to birds fed by God to teach his listeners not to be anxious. The argument depends on God's care for the birds being real.

Matthew 10:29–31 and Luke 12:6–7

> [29] Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. … [31] Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.
>
> — Matthew 10:29, 31

> [6] Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? [7] But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.
>
> — Luke 12:6–7

Context. The point of the saying is reassurance for Jesus' followers, who are worth "more than many sparrows." It rests on the claim that not even the cheapest bird in the market is forgotten by God.

Notes. A "farthing" was the smallest English coin; it stands here for a small Roman coin of very low value.

Luke 14:5 and 13:15

> Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?
>
> — Luke 14:5

> Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?
>
> — Luke 13:15

Context. Defending healings on the sabbath, Jesus appeals to what his listeners already do for their animals on that day. Matthew 12:11 gives a similar saying about a sheep fallen into a pit.

Notes. The Greek text behind the KJV reads "an ass or an ox" in Luke 14:5; most modern critical editions read "a son or an ox."

Mark 1:13

> And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Context. Only Mark mentions that Jesus was "with the wild beasts" during his forty days in the wilderness. The phrase is brief, and interpreters differ on whether it suggests danger, peaceful company, or both.

Romans 8:19–22

> [19] For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. [20] For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, [21] Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

Context. Paul describes the whole created world as sharing in suffering and in the hope of being set free.

Notes. "The creature" and "the creation" translate the same Greek word, *ktisis*. Many modern interpreters understand it here to mean the non-human creation, though its exact scope is debated.

3 Witnesses from Christian Tradition

Over the centuries, a number of figures from Christian tradition left behind a record of a close relationship with animals — birds, bears, horses, and, in particular, dogs. This chapter gathers ten of them, always distinguishing documented history from later tradition. It is not a theological argument: it is an invitation to encounter these lives and texts, and, through them, perhaps to see the animals who share our daily lives a little differently.

3.1 Francis of Assisi

c. 1181–1226 · Italy · founder of the Franciscan order



Figure 3.1: Sassetta, *The Wolf of Gubbio*, c. 1437–1444, National Gallery, London — public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

Francis's own words about creation survive directly: the *Canticle of the Creatures*, composed around 1225, calls the sun and wind "brother" and the moon, water, and earth "sister," placing every created thing in one family (Francis of Assisi 1906). In his own medieval Umbrian, as preserved in the Assisi manuscript:

> "Laudato sie, mi signore, cum tucte le tue creature."
>
> — praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures (translation ours) (Francis of Assisi, n.d.).

A later tradition — set down nearly a century afterward in the *Fioretti* ("Little Flowers of St. Francis"), and absent from the saint's official biography — tells how Francis went to meet a wolf, a wild relative of the dog, that had been terrorizing the town of Gubbio, and won from it a promise of peace with the townspeople in exchange for being fed. It is a lovely, much-retold story; it belongs to tradition, not to verified history (*The Little Flowers of St. Francis (i Fioretti), Ch. XXI*, n.d.; Wikipedia contributors 2026f; *The Wolf of Gubbio* 2025).

3.2 Roch of Montpellier

traditional dates c. 1295–1327, uncertain · France and Italy



Figure 3.2: Cesare da Sesto, detail of the *Polittico di San Rocco*, 1523, Pinacoteca del Castello Sforzesco, Milan. Photo: Sailko, CC BY 3.0 (Wikimedia Commons).

Roch's life is known mostly through late hagiographies, with few verifiable facts: even his dates are uncertain. According to those accounts, he nursed plague victims in the hospitals of several Italian cities; what is certain is that his cult grew sharply after the 1477–79 plague (Wikipedia contributors 2026e). Tradition holds that, falling ill himself, he withdrew into a forest, and that a dog belonging to a local nobleman brought him bread every day and licked his wound, keeping him alive until he was found. It is why Roch is still invoked today as patron of dogs — one of the most direct saint-and-dog associations in the whole of Christian tradition, even though, like almost everything else in his life, it is tradition rather than historical record (Wikipedia contributors 2026e).

3.3 Hubert of Liège

c. 656–727 · Frankish Ardennes · bishop of Maastricht and Liège



Figure 3.3: Jan Brueghel the Elder, *The Vision of Saint Hubert*, 1617–1620 — public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

Hubert was a historically documented bishop who died in 727. He was first buried in Liège, and in 825 his remains were moved to the Benedictine abbey in the Belgian Ardennes that now bears his name (Wikipedia contributors 2026c). The best-known legend — that, hunting on Good Friday, he saw a glowing cross between a stag's antlers, and that the encounter turned him to conversion — is a later addition, absent from any record close to his life: it was borrowed from the legend of Saint Eustace and attached to Hubert only in the 15th century (Wikipedia contributors 2026c).

What is history, not legend, is what happened afterward: the monks of the Abbey of Saint-Hubert kept a keen-scented hunting hound associated with his name — the *chien de Saint-Hubert* — and from about 1200 sent several pairs every year as a gift to the King of France. The Bloodhound is generally believed to descend from these hounds, though its exact ancestry is uncertain. Few saints are linked so concretely to a dog breed that still exists (Wikipedia contributors 2026a, 2026b; *St. Hubert's Hound*, n.d.).

3.4 Anthony the Great

c. 251–356 · Egypt · father of Christian monasticism

Anthony's life is known through a near-contemporary text: the *Life of Antony*, written by Athanasius of Alexandria shortly after his death, by someone who had known him. The wild beasts in its early chapters are demons taking animal form, but a later passage tells of real ones. When Anthony had settled at his "inner mountain" and planted a small garden, desert animals coming to drink kept damaging it. Taking gentle hold of one of them, he said to them all: "Why do you hurt me, when I hurt none of you? Depart, and in the name of the Lord come not near this spot" — and, Athanasius writes, they came no more (Athanasius of Alexandria 1892, secs. 9, 50).

3.5 Cuthbert of Lindisfarne

c. 634–687 · Northumbria

Cuthbert, too, is known through an account close to his life: the *Life of Cuthbert*, written by the Venerable Bede about thirty years after his death, drawing on people who had known him. Bede tells how Cuthbert prayed all night standing in the cold sea, after which two otters came up, warmed his feet with their breath, and dried them with their fur before leaving with his blessing (Bede, n.d., ch. 10). A later tradition, first recorded in the 12th century, five hundred years after his death, holds that Cuthbert also protected the eider ducks nesting on the Farne Islands — still known locally today as "Cuddy's ducks" — and the story is often retold as one of Europe's earliest bird-protection laws; Bede says nothing of it (*St Cuthbert's Ducks*, n.d.).

3.6 Kevin of Glendalough

traditional dates 498–618, implausibly long · Ireland

No contemporary account of Kevin survives. The earliest dated written version of his best-known story comes from Gerald of Wales, around 1188, more than five centuries after his death: during a Lenten retreat, as Kevin prayed with his hand stretched out through the window of his cell, a blackbird laid her eggs in his palm, and he kept his hand open and still until the brood had hatched (Gerald of Wales 2000, dist. II, ch. 28). Later retellings have the chicks stay until they fledged. The image has carried through the centuries as a picture of patience and attentiveness to the smallest creatures (Wikipedia contributors 2026d; *"The Boy with the Blackbird in His Hand" (Saint Kevin of Glendalough)*, n.d.).

3.7 Seraphim of Sarov

1754–1833 · Russia

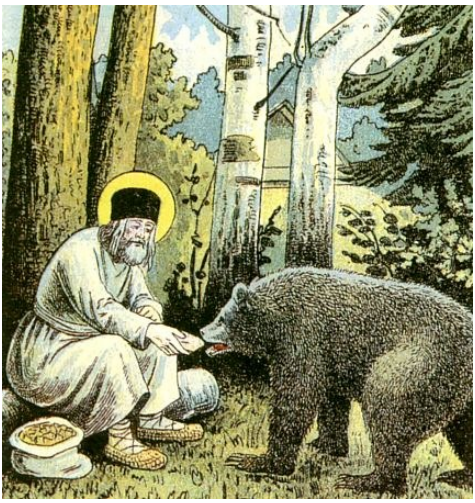

Figure 3.4: *Seraphim of Sarov feeds a bear* (detail), anonymous lithograph, 1903 — public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

Unlike the medieval legends above, the best-known episode of Seraphim's relationship with animals has direct witnesses: nuns from the nearby Diveyevo convent and a fellow monk, Father Joseph, left written accounts, still in the 19th century, of a bear that regularly visited Seraphim's forest hermitage and that he fed by hand, without fear. The accounts are not a critical edition of primary sources, but they converge consistently, coming from several people who knew him (*St. Seraphim of Sarov and the Bear "Misha"* 2021; *St Seraphim and the Bear* 2004).

3.8 Martin de Porres

1579–1639 · Peru · Dominican lay brother

Martin, put in charge of the infirmary at the Dominican convent of the Rosary in Lima, is consistently remembered, in biographical sources and in his canonization process, for his care of sick or stray animals — dogs, cats, even mice he refused to have poisoned. The traditional image of him with a dog, a cat, and a mouse eating peacefully from the same dish sums up that care: not a one-off exception, but a pattern of life (*Martin de Porres*, n.d.; *St. Martin de Porres*, n.d.).

3.9 Columba of Iona

c. 521–597 · Ireland and Scotland

Adomnán, ninth abbot of Iona, wrote the *Life of Columba* about a century after his death, drawing on the written and oral memory of the community Columba himself had founded. Near the end of Columba's life, an old horse that had carried the monastery's milk pails for years came up to him, laid its head on his chest and, according to Adomnán, wept. When a monk tried to lead the animal away, Columba stopped him, saying that the Creator had revealed to the horse, in his own way, that its master was about to leave (Adomnán of Iona 1857).

3.10 Modestus of Jerusalem

d. 634 · Patriarch of Jerusalem

Modestus was a historically documented Patriarch of Jerusalem, who rebuilt churches there after the Persian sack of 614. His veneration as a protector of domestic animals, and the prayer still said in his name in Greek and Cypriot Orthodox tradition — asking for the health of the animals families depended on — is a later devotional tradition: its authorship by Modestus is attributed, not confirmed by any 7th-century document. Even so, it remains, thirteen centuries on, one of the rare examples of a Christian prayer devoted specifically to the well-being of animals (Sanidopoulos 2015).

A note on dog behaviour

The stories above show dogs as companions, protectors, and instruments of care. It is worth remembering that a dog's behaviour is shaped, above all, by experience, environment, and the human care it receives. An aggressive dog carries no moral stain, and it proves nothing about dogs being impure or dangerous by nature — it is behaviour, with causes, not a fate.

4 Prayers

This chapter collects prayers from several Christian traditions that speak of animals: a psalm and a canticle sung for centuries in the daily offices of the Church, a Latin blessing from the Roman Ritual, an Orthodox prayer for sick animals, and a twentieth-century Protestant prayer. For each one, a short line gives its tradition, date, source, translation, and what is known about its authorship. Several of these texts are longer than the passages printed here; omissions are marked with "…".

4.1 Psalm 148

Jewish and Christian scripture · date uncertain · King James Version (1611)

> [7] Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: [8] Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word: [9] Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: [10] Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: [11] Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: [12] Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: [13] Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.
>
> — Psalm 148:7–13 (*The King James Version of the Bible*, n.d.)

Psalm 148 calls on the whole of creation, from the angels to the "creeping things," to praise God, and names wild and domestic animals in the same breath as kings and children. With Psalms 149 and 150 it closed the traditional morning office, which takes its name, Lauds, from their repeated *laudate*, "praise ye."

Notes. "Dragons" renders a Hebrew word for great sea creatures.

4.2 The Benedicite

Anglican, also Catholic and Orthodox · from the Greek additions to Daniel 3, 2nd or 1st century BC · Book of Common Prayer (1662)

> O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever. …
>
> O all ye Green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever. …
>
> O ye Whales, and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
>
> O all ye Fowls of the air, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
>
> O all ye Beasts and Cattle, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
>
> O ye Children of men, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
>
> — *Benedicite, omnia opera* (*The Book of Common Prayer*, n.d., Morning Prayer)

This canticle is the song of the three young men in the furnace, found in the Greek text of the book of Daniel and printed in the KJV among the Apocrypha as the *Song of the Three Holy Children*. The

Book of Common Prayer offers it at Morning Prayer as an alternative to the *Te Deum*; it is also sung at Sunday Morning Prayer in the Catholic Liturgy of the Hours and, as one of the biblical odes, at Orthodox Matins.

Notes. The spelling follows the 1662 text, with the old long "f" printed as "s."

4.3 Blessing of animals from the Roman Ritual

Catholic · Roman Ritual, 1903 edition · Latin, translation ours

> *Benedictionem tuam, Domine, haec animalia accipiant: qua corpore salventur, et ab omni malo per intercessionem beati Antonii liberentur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.*
>
> May these animals receive your blessing, O Lord, by which they may be kept safe in body and, through the intercession of blessed Anthony, be delivered from every evil. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
>
> — *Benedictio equorum et animalium* (*Rituale Romanum Pauli V pontificis maximi jussu editum et a Benedicto XIV auctum et castigatum* 1903, 74*)

This is the closing prayer of the "blessing of horses and other animals" printed in the appendix of the Roman Ritual, the Catholic book of sacraments and blessings. After it, the animals are sprinkled with holy water. The prayer asks for the intercession of Anthony the Great, the desert monk described in the chapter on witnesses from Christian tradition, whose feast on 17 January has long been the customary day for blessing animals.

4.4 Prayer of Saint Modestus for animals

Orthodox · composed around 1800 · English translation as published by John Sanidopoulos (2015), translator not named

> … grant compassion on the suffering animals, the herd of which is being afflicted by the sickle of death. And not having any word besides bellowing, and bitter and random noises, in Your mercy, take away their suffering and pain. For if You even call rational beings to this sympathy: "A righteous man has compassion upon his animals", as is written, how much more do You show compassion on these, Who are their Fashioner and Foreseer? …
>
> — Prayer of Saint Modestus (Sanidopoulos 2015)

This prayer is said in Greek Orthodox practice "in the case of every fatal sickness and danger" to farm animals and bees. It is written in the voice of Modestus, the 7th-century Patriarch of Jerusalem whose profile appears in the chapter on witnesses from Christian tradition, but its published text credits it to the Athonite monk Nikodemos the Hagiorite (1749–1809). The words "A righteous man has compassion upon his animals" quote Proverbs 12:10.

Notes. Only a short excerpt of this modern translation is reproduced here.

4.5 “For This World”

Baptist · 1910 · Walter Rauschenbusch, original English

> Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all the living things, our little brothers, to whom thou hast given this earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of the Earth, which should have gone up to thee in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for thee, and that they love the sweetness of life even as we, and serve thee in their place better than we in ours.
>
> — Walter Rauschenbusch, “For This World” (Rauschenbusch 1910, 47–48)

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) was an American Baptist pastor and theologian. This passage is the second paragraph of a longer prayer of thanksgiving for the created world. Its “groan of travail” echoes Romans 8:22.

Attribution. Versions of this passage circulate widely as a “Prayer of St. Basil the Great,” often reworded. No such prayer is known from the writings or liturgy of Basil of Caesarea (4th century); the text comes from Rauschenbusch’s 1910 collection.

5 Dogs in Service Today

> **Editorial note:** This chapter differs from those before it. It does not draw on Christian primary sources or hagiographic tradition; it documents present-day, secular examples of trained dogs assisting people, included to extend the historical thread of the previous chapter into living practice. Claims here rest on organizational and scientific sources, not devotional material.

The relationship between people and animals did not stay in the past. Today, trained dogs help people in concrete, well-studied ways — always as working partners, with their own training and welfare, not as mere tools.

5.1 Guide and assistance work

Organizations under Assistance Dogs International have, since 1986, brought together more than 140 programs across five continents training guide dogs, mobility assistance dogs, medical-alert dogs, and psychiatric service dogs under demanding accreditation standards (*Who We Are*, n.d.).

5.2 Search and rescue

In the United States, the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation recruits dogs from shelters, trains them for eight to ten months, and certifies them, alongside firefighters and emergency crews, to locate people alive under rubble after disasters (*Canine Training Program*, n.d.; *FAQs*, n.d.).

5.3 Medical detection

Peer-reviewed studies have explored whether trained dogs can identify, by scent, signals associated with certain diseases, including some cancers. Results are promising but uneven across studies, and these dogs are treated as a complementary research tool, not a substitute for clinical diagnosis (Bauër et al. 2022).

5.4 Well-being and therapy

In a small pilot trial funded by the Human Animal Bond Research Institute, sixty adults hospitalized in a psychiatric unit were randomly assigned to brief daily therapy-dog visits, visits from the handler alone, or usual care. Loneliness fell more after the dog visits than in either comparison group, although the effect had largely faded at follow-up except among dog owners (Gee et al. 2025; *Empirical Support for Therapy Animal Interventions*, n.d.).

5.5 Science and conservation

Scent-detection dog teams also take part in conservation work, locating nests or traces of rare species — always as a handler-and-dog team, held to the same welfare standards as any other working dog (McKeague et al. 2024).

6 Further Reading

This chapter suggests where to go next. The first section lists complete editions of early texts quoted in this booklet; the second, scholarly studies; the third, statements by church leaders. Each entry says briefly why it is useful. The full list of works cited is in the References.

6.1 Primary sources in translation

- **Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of Antony.*** The fourth-century life of the first desert monk, written by someone who had known him. The 1892 translation is freely available online (Athanasius of Alexandria 1892).
- **Bede, *Life of Cuthbert.*** Bede's prose life of the Northumbrian saint, including the otters on the shore and many other encounters with animals (Bede, n.d.).
- **Adomnán of Iona, *Life of Columba.*** Written about a century after Columba's death, with the story of the old horse and much else about life on Iona. Freely available in the 1857 translation (Adomnán of Iona 1857); Richard Sharpe's modern translation with notes is also widely available (Adomnán of Iona 1995).
- **Gerald of Wales, *The Topography of Ireland.*** A twelfth-century description of Ireland that includes the earliest dated account of Kevin and the blackbird (Gerald of Wales 2000).
- **Helen Waddell, *Beasts and Saints.*** Translations from Latin of stories about saints and animals from the fourth to the twelfth century, arranged as the Desert Fathers, the Saints

of the West, and the Saints of Ireland (Waddell 1934). A literary translation rather than a critical edition, but the best single collection of these stories in English.

6.2 Scholarly studies

- **Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages.*** A historian's study of animal stories in the lives of the saints: where they come from and what they meant to medieval readers (Alexander 2008).
- **Richard Bauckham, *Living with Other Creatures.*** Essays by a biblical scholar on what the Bible says about animals and the rest of creation (Bauckham 2011).
- **David L. Clough, *On Animals*, volume I: *Systematic Theology.*** A full-length study of animals in Christian doctrine, covering creation, reconciliation, and redemption (Clough 2012).
- **Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough, eds., *Creaturely Theology.*** Essays by theologians and other scholars on God, humans, and other animals (Deane-Drummond and Clough 2009).
- **Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology.*** A widely read book by an Anglican theologian that argues for a Christian ethic of animal care. Unlike most of the works above, it sets out to make a case (Linzey 1994).

6.3 Church statements

- **Pope Francis, *Laudato si'* (2015).** An encyclical on care for creation. Paragraphs 69, 92, and 130 speak directly about animals, including the statement that "every act of cruelty towards any creature is 'contrary to human dignity' " (Pope Francis 2015, sec. 92).

- **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, *On Earth as in Heaven.*** Talks and writings on creation by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, who is first in honour among the bishops of the Orthodox Church (Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch 2012).

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