

Pets

# Bless the BEASTS

Take your pet to pray in celebration of St. Francis Day



**EAT, PRAY, LOVE:** The Rev. Michael Phillips, with his dog Freedom, will bless animals at Holy Trinity starting Oct. 7.

**N**EXT month, events all over the city will honor Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, who believed that all creatures reflect God's love.

At many houses of worship, animal lovers are invited to bring their pets to receive a special blessing on the first Sunday in October in observance of St. Francis Day.

The Cathedral of Saint John the Divine welcomes creatures great and small to its annual St. Francis Day celebration on Oct. 7, which includes a blessing of the animals on the Cathedral green and a festive fair.

Among the fair's attractions will be adoptable dogs from Bideawee shelter ([bideawee.org](http://bideawee.org)).

Free passes to the blessing service are available on a first-come, first-served basis; contact [stjohndivine.org](mailto:stjohndivine.org).

On the same day, from noon to 2 p.m., Canine Court at Van Cortlandt Park in The Bronx will host an outdoor interfaith animal-blessing service; enter the park at Broadway and Lakeview Place.

For a change of pace, Grace Church, on Broadway and 10th Street in Manhattan, will hold its animal-blessing service on



Saturday, Oct. 13, at 11 a.m.

Meanwhile, on East 88th Street between First and Second avenues, the Church of the Holy Trinity welcomes animal lovers every day of the year. The church is open to human and canine visitors daily, and the garden out front is a favorite resting spot for people and dogs.

Naturally, Holy Trinity's annual animal blessing is a popular draw. Judging by previous years, turnout for next Sunday's three services — at 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. — will be huge.

"After Christmas and Easter, this is our biggest Sunday of the year," reports the Rev. Michael Phillips, who has a golden retriever named Freedom.

Although humans preside over church blessing services, it's really our animals that bless us with their unconditional love.

"Animals are very sensitive to people's emotional states," says Phillips.

"If people are sad or troubled, pets pick up on that. They exercise a ministry of presence to their people."

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