

Reflection on St Francis day with the animal blessing

Eternal God, in the reading of the Scripture, may your Word be heard; in the meditations of our hearts, may your Word be known; and in the faithfulness of our lives, may your Word be shown. Amen.

Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 6:25-29

Do not worry

Whenever I observe my flatmate – the cat, I can't help but think that she doesn't seem to worry anything about her life. I can see her napping throughout the day on the weekend, even without moving at all. From my observation, I conclude that cats seem very adaptable to any environment. When I expect a very long day and have to put her outside, she doesn't resist but easily ventures out things outside. She would wait for me to come from work while sitting on the front lawn. I often think that what she needs from me is to let her inside to access food and water. She doesn't pay rent, vacuum the lounge or rooms, or cook food, but groom, play, sleep and hunt! What a happy – worry-free life! In Luke, Jesus says to us not to worry about life and body as the heavenly Father provides all. God is caring for the birds in the sky and the lilies of the field. Birds and lilies don't seem to depend on human care as much as our pets or flowers do in our garden. Yet wild or tamed, God cares for them, and so do we.

Unlike the birds in the sky and the lilies in the field, we worry too much. Researches show that humans seem to be hard-wired to worry regardless of the state of possession. This specific trait evolved from the Stone Age as hunter-gatherers when food was not always guaranteed or shelters either. The audience of Jesus' words – 'Do not worry' was not very different from the ancient people. Life in the first century was challenging when it came to securing the necessities of life, like food and clothing. Jesus knew it well, and he didn't mean that food was not important. Jesus already taught the disciples to pray for 'daily bread,'¹ and then trust God to provide it. Indeed, food and shelter keep us alive, but not entirely. If life is more than food or clothing, there may be something we should know. In Genesis, we find clues about the purpose-driven life that make us living being only when we fulfil the duties that God commended.

In Genesis 2:18, God created animals to give a partner to man (Adam). Although the man named all the animals, he still couldn't find a helper as his partner. God gave Adam the purpose

¹ Matthew 6:11

of his life that he would fulfil with the helper. They were commended for being fruitful and multiplying to care for every living thing that moves upon the earth.² Until today, God doesn't work alone but with partners – the children of God. When nature is damaged and no longer sustainable, birds and lilies will die too. On an individual level, the pets in our homes are entrusted to us with caring for them as part of creation. On the creation level, it is our work to keep every living thing that moves upon the earth safe and harmoniously living with us. Once again, through our pets and living things around us, we find the purpose of life that God commended. May God help us fulfil the purpose of life today and always. Amen.

² Genesis 1:28