

## Why I Am Catholic

Because of the Church's ongoing concern for animals, wildlife, and the creatures that inhabit this planet with us.

Throughout our history, we have spoken of our responsibility to care for animals, our desire to co-exist well, and our concern for their welfare. St. Francis of Assisi is the most noted spokesperson. Yesterday (Oct.4), we celebrated his feast day.

"Not to hurt our humble brethren in fur, feather or fin, is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission: to be of service to them whenever they require it." (bookrags.com)

The Bible tells us that Adam named all the animals God created and Noah saved two of every creature from the flood. From beginning, God has entrusted their care to us.

St. Anthony of Padua, St. Anthony the Abbot, St. Blaise, and St. Nicholas of Tolentino are other noted patrons of animals. Eric A. Kimmel has written a book *Brother Wolf, Sister Sparrow: stories about saints and animals* (2003) based on St. Francis "Sermon to the Birds" that relates many accounts and legends. These include: St. Ambrose and the Bees, St. Brendan and the Whale, St. Kevin and the Otters, and St. Francis and the Wolf.

Let us not forget about the legend of St. Patrick banishing the snakes from Ireland (a legend that may mean him driving Satan out by means of the Catholic faith).

Church teaching flows from the seventh commandment: "You shall not steal." "The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2415)

"Animals are God's creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. Thus men owe them kindness. We should recall the gentleness with which saints like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri treated animals." (2417)

"It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly...One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due to persons." (2418)