



COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

Catholics prepare for a happy, yappy weekend

Parishes to hold annual blessing of pets for St. Francis of Assisi Day

VANCOUVER (Oct. 3, 2013) – All creatures great and small will line up at two Vancouver-area parishes this weekend for the annual blessing of pets.

From the feathered to the furry, animals and their owners will be centre stage at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Vancouver and St. Clare of Assisi Church in Coquitlam. Oct. 4 is the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and ecology. Parishes named for the saint often commemorate the day with a pet blessing.

At St. Francis of Assisi, the blessings will take place Saturday in the parish garden at 2 p.m. St. Clare of Assisi will hold its pet blessing Sunday at 2 p.m. The parish will accept donations of pet food, towels, collars, leashes, and cash, to be given to a local animal shelter. All are welcome to bring their pets.

Pope Francis is also marking the feast of his namesake by travelling to Assisi on Friday. The Pope took the name Francis in honour of the Italian saint known for his life of poverty, saying he wants a missionary church like the one sought by St. Francis: "We need to give hope to young people, help the aged and open ourselves toward the future and spread love."

During his one-day pilgrimage to St. Francis's birthplace, the Pope will pray in churches and chapels that were significant in the life and conversion of the beloved Saint. He will also meet with the poor, disabled and sick.

St. Francis of Assisi has long been one of the most popular saints in the Church. Born in Assisi, Italy, in 1181, he spent much of his youth in frivolity. After a serious illness he experienced a conversion, began to care for the sick and gave his money to the poor. It was in the Sanctuary of St. Damiano where Francis heard God asking him to go out and rebuild his Church.

St. Clare was a friend of St. Francis who heard him preach and was inspired to follow him in living a life of poverty. With St. Francis she founded the Poor Clare Sisters, who have a monastery in Mission, B.C.

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