

This is Daffodil - a lovely grey, long haired, guinea pig! Look at that cute face!

And although Daisy, our cat, is getting bolder - we've seen her jumping on the headstones in the churchyard - I didn't think she was quite ready to bring to church yet.

so I think Pets are amazing - we make these bonds with our cat or dog, goldfish or lizard!

During these times when so much else is changing - they are a constant source of cuddles, affection, love and interest. They haven't changed.

So give thanks to God for our pets and the love and life they give us.

They also need looking after.. cleaning out, grooming - this one gets a bath and a haircut every couple of weeks - she loves the hair dryer afterwards!

And us humans, we were made to work, to do stuff, to have a purpose, and to look after things - when God made the garden of eden for us, he made all the animals and told us to "husband it all" - not to be married to it! But the old meaning of husband, which is one who cares for things - so when we care for our gardens and nature, and we care for the animals and our especially our pets, we are doing what we were created to do.

So give thanks to God for the way our pets show us that God made us for a reason, and that they remind us to care for all the animals and all creation.

And there's one other thing that pets teach us about God, and its really important.

They remind us that we are creatures too. God made us. He doesn't keep us like a pet, but he does look after us - gives us our families to care for us, gives us homes and food.

And our pets - they don't worry about next week, or get anxious about what the weather will be. They don't try to get rich or famous. They don't pretend to be something other than they are - they just are themselves, and ask to be loved just as they are.

Sometimes we can need reminding that God loves us, just as we are - just as we love our pets unconditionally - even when they escape and run away, or they bring in a mouse! or we have to clean up their mess - we still love them, just for being them.

And that's how God loves us.

so the next time you're stroking your pet, or feeling it locusts, or taking it for a walk - just remember that God feels the same way about you - the same love, the same care, the same attention - but probably more! The Bible says - we are the apple of God's eye, that he never stops thinking about us, that he loves us so well he knows every hair on your head (its just an expression Roger, even if you have little on top - he knows all about you!). And that nothing you can do can stop him loving you. He loves you so much, he sent the most precious thing he had to make life better - he sent Jesus, his only son, to help us be friends with him again.

So we give thanks for our pets, and all animals, and the love we give and receive, and what they tell us of God.

The sermon of St. Francis

'O birds, my sisters, you owe much to God your Creator and you must praise Him always and everywhere for he has given you freedom to fly wherever you like, and he has also given you double and triple decorated cloaks, and he has preserved you in the ark of Noah, so that your kind should not grow less on earth; and furthermore you must thank him for the element of air which he has assigned to you. What is more you neither sow nor reap, and God feeds you, and has given you the streams and fountains to drink from, the mountains and the hills to shelter you and the high trees whereon you can build your nests. And although you can neither spin or sew, God clothes you and your children. Therefore the Creator loves you dearly, as he has given you so many blessings, and so, my sisters, beware of the sin of ingratitude and be always eager to praise God'