

Day XV – St. Francis

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And towards them also, O Lord, towards the humble beasts that together with us endure the cares and toil of the day, and sacrifice their poor lives for the good of your land, we beg you, direct the great mercy of your heart towards them. For Thou hast promised to save both man and beast, and great is Thy loving kindness, O Master, Redeemer of the world.”

“Prayer of St. Basil”, Bishop of Caesarea, A. D. 370.

The 4th of October is the day of the Saint Poverello of Assisi [St. Francis of Assisi, “the poor man of Assisi”] and at the same time, for ten years, it has been a day of kindness and mercy towards animals, birds and plants, the only day of the year when our attention, feelings and thoughts concentrate on those beings who live, rejoice, suffer, grow and die next to us, and about which we really know so little.

For we can collect hundreds of facts about the external life and habits of animals or birds, but do we know the mechanism of their consciousness? In this world we are surrounded by mysterious beings with equal rights to life and citizenship on earth, beings developing along a particular evolutionary line - in parallel with us - for millions of years, but have we tried to get closer to this world with a desire to understand and help it - as stronger to weaker?

For thousands of years we have lived alongside animals and birds, and what do we know, for example, about their reactions to colors and sounds? We are not even sure what colors of the solar spectra are available to animals, or if they see green as green and red as red? The attitude of people towards animals was based on the superstition of the necessity of meat food, on cruelty as thoughtless as sport, or on the desire to eat meat - ruthless exploitation. And yet we have stated so many times that these beings feel, love, hate and suffer and are capable of the greatest sacrifices. How many people, how many defenseless children, owe their lives to the heroic attitude of the dog-defender?

Today I do not want to talk about strictly scientific topics related to animal psychology, bird intuition, plant intelligence, or flashes of mineral awareness. I don't want to quote the latest theories about the harmfulness of meat food and vaccines, nor to raise astonishing esoteric hypotheses regarding the evolution and origin of animals, plants, birds and minerals.

On the day dedicated to the Big Brother of Umbria, who embraced all living beings with the deepest love, I would like to appeal to my heart, to his goodness, mercy and understanding. I wish each of us at least on that day we helped at least one person in need help, or a suffering animal, so that we can show at least a little kindness and heart to birds and plants.

The wisdom of the East says that he who has mastered the animal in himself may not be cruel or unjust to animals, and that animals feel it and understand it. Purity and love attract the trust of all living beings to us. There are so many beautiful examples from the life of St. Francis: the story of

the wolf of Gubbio and the little donkey of Verna, of the birds surrounding the head of the Saint Poverello in a singing cloud, of flowers, which smelled more beautiful and sparkled with life and colors when He approached them, approached or touched their flowers with his hands; about stones that never hurt His bare feet -----

Rieti, Spoleto, Borgo, San Sepulchro, Verna, Il Greccio, San Damiano, Gubbio, Assisi, Santa Maria degli Angeli - all sunny Umbria, the earth beloved by the Saint, is full of memories of that Love and Goodness which he showed all living beings.

In the most beautiful hymn of love in "II Canto delle Creature", he says (il Stolterello di Dio [a simple man in God]) about the love that embraces every manifestation of divine life, which warmly embraces Brother Sun and the Radiant Sisters - Stars, and Bodily Death ("... sora nostra - morte corporale") and colorful flowers, and beasts, and singing birds, and fish, and insects.

So, in His name, today let us show a little kindness and mercy to all those beings through whom, as well as through us, flows the current of One Life, a small particle of cosmic energy.
