

*I Will  
See  
You in  
Heaven*

*Friar Jack Wintz*



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*I Will See You in Heaven*

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*This book is written for  
the millions of people  
who love their animal companions.  
All may find inspiration here.*

*This updated edition includes  
photographs and short memories  
of beloved animal companions,  
provided by our readers and others  
who have loved a pet as one of the  
family, supplementing the original  
text of Friar Jack.*

*I Will See You in Heaven* is also designed to help those who have recently lost a pet by keeping it in loving remembrance. You may want to use the following Presentation Page.

*Presented to*

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*By* \_\_\_\_\_

*In Loving Remembrance of*

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*On This Day*

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# Liberty

Liberty (“Libby,”) was a sassy girl who taught us how to love more fully. Maybe even more importantly, as we watched God love her and take care of her right up to the day he took her home, she was an example of how much God loves each of us.



# Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	4
<i>Three Prayers of Blessing</i>	7
FOR ANY ANIMAL, FISH, BIRD, OR OTHER CREATURE	
<b>1</b> <i>And It Was Very Good</i>	13
<b>2</b> <i>The Happiness Principle</i>	19
<b>3</b> <i>Blessing the Animals</i>	25
<b>4</b> <i>Noah, the Ark, and the Dove</i>	31
<b>5</b> <i>Animals and God's Will</i>	37
<b>6</b> <i>Jonah and the Whale</i>	43

7	<i>Creatures Praise Our Creator</i>	51
8	<i>The Song of St. Francis</i>	57
9	<i>St. Francis and the Creatures</i>	65
10	<i>Jesus and the World of Creation</i>	75
11	<i>Praying with Creatures</i>	79
12	<i>The Soul of a Dog</i>	83
13	<i>The Afterlife</i>	91
14	<i>Conclusion</i>	99



# *Introduction*

We have a deep desire to know if we will see our pets again, and all the other lovely creatures alongside whom we now inhabit this planet. What will become of them after they die?

A friend of mine once told me the following story:

Anne lives in Cincinnati, where a few years ago she faced the important questions of death and eternity as she was present at the death of her dearly loved dog, Miss Daisy. Anne had befriended Miss Daisy ten years earlier when the dog, of mixed Spaniel origin, was barely one year old. With the help of her adult son, Anne rescued Miss Daisy from Cincinnati's inner city.

"I would see her wandering around the neighborhood where I worked at an elementary school," Anne told me. "I came to realize that she was obviously a stray and lost—and she was adorable! I took cans of tuna to the area where Miss Daisy hung out, but she was very afraid of people and wouldn't approach the tuna till she was left alone. My rescue attempts went on for many months."

In time, Anne was successful in winning Miss Daisy's confidence and was able to take her to her home.

"Miss Daisy was still very shy," Anne told me, "but she eventually became a loyal and loving member of our family. Realizing that Miss Daisy needed a companion, I went to

the dog pound and came home with a dog named Andy. For ten years or so, Miss Daisy and Andy were very happy companions, and both became cherished members of the family. But I became especially attached to Miss Daisy.

“Eventually, Miss Daisy became ill, and we had to make the very difficult decision to have her ‘put down.’ My son and I took her to the veterinarian so he could put her to sleep. We wanted the vet to come out to our car so Miss Daisy would be in familiar surroundings and we could be holding her, but he refused our request. So we had to take her inside. We laid her on the vet’s table on her special blanket. We petted Miss Daisy gently and spoke softly to her as the vet got everything ready to give her the injection. Miss Daisy lay there quietly for a few seconds, and then, just before the injection took effect, she lifted her head and looked directly into my eyes. I can still see that look. It was as if she knew what was going on and she was saying good-bye.”

Anne recalls how her heart melted, and to this day tears come to her eyes when she remembers that scene. “I still miss

## 4 *I Will See You in Heaven*

the loving pet who had been my dear friend for so many years. *I know I will see Miss Daisy again!*"



I'm sure that most of us have our own memories of being profoundly grief-stricken at the death of a beloved pet. These are not childish concerns, but the mature reflections of loving Christians.

Many of us prefer to pose the question "Will I see my dog in heaven?" in broader spiritual terms. There is more involved in this question than simply wondering if we will ever be reunited with a loved animal. For instance, does God's plan of salvation include only humans, or does it include animals, too? In even broader terms, does God intend the *whole* created world to be saved?

As a Franciscan friar for over fifty years, I am familiar with the stories of St. Francis of Assisi and his close relationship with animals, and these stories have informed the way that I view these things. Perhaps you've heard the stories of this brown-robed friar preaching to the birds, releasing Brother

Rabbit from a trap, or letting Sister Raven serve as his "alarm clock" to awaken him for early morning prayer. I've known for a long time that historians have credited Francis with composing one of the first great poems in the Italian language—a poem, or hymn, usually entitled *The Canticle of the Creatures*. In this hymn, sometimes known as *The Canticle of Brother Sun*, Francis invites all his brother and sister creatures to praise their Creator—Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brother Fire and Sister Water, as well as Sister Earth, our mother, with all her various fruits and vividly colored flowers.

Some thirty years ago I came to the conclusion, which I've never abandoned, that St. Francis came to see that all creatures form one family of creation. Maybe that conclusion is obvious to you, but for me this idea dawned quite gradually. The conviction has grown stronger and stronger, and this book has grown out of that conviction, and explores the implications of it. What would it mean if all creatures were one family? How would it affect us? How would it change our understanding about God, and about how we relate to God and to each other?



# Zeus

In January, we lost my husband's retired K-9 partner and my beloved sidekick Zeus after a courageous fight with cancer. Trained in bomb detection, tracking, and patrol, Zeus was the first explosives detection K-9 in the Saratoga County Sheriff's Department. He was a legend, most known for his gentle demeanor and playfulness.

# *Three Prayers of Blessing*

FOR ANY ANIMAL, FISH, BIRD, OR OTHER CREATURE

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

*[Christ] is before all things,  
and in him all things hold together. —Col. 1:17*

Gather your family and friends together for these blessings  
—it is good to have as much of the family of God present as possible.  
Insert the name of your animal companion into these prayers.

*For Any of God's Creatures*

Blessed are you, Lord God,  
Maker of all living creatures.

On the fifth and sixth days of creation,  
you called forth fish in the sea,  
birds in the air, and animals on the land.

You inspired St. Francis to call all animals  
his brothers and sisters.

We ask you to bless this animal (these animals)  
gathered about us.

By the power of your love,  
enable him or her (them) to live according to your plan.

May we always praise you for all your beauty in creation.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, in all your creatures.

Amen.

*For One or More Sick Creatures*

Heavenly Creator,  
you made all things for your glory  
and made us caretakers of this creature  
(these creatures) under our care.  
Restore to health and strength this animal  
(this pet) that you have entrusted to us.  
Keep this animal (this pet)  
always under your loving protection.  
Blessed are you, Lord God,  
And holy is your name for ever and ever. Amen.

*For an Animal That Has Died  
or Is About to Die*

Loving God,

our beloved pet and companion, (name),  
is on its final journey.

We will miss (name) dearly  
because of the joy and affection  
(name) has given to us.

Bless (name) and give him/her peace.

May your care for (name) never die.

We thank you for the gift  
that (name) has been to us.

Give us hope that in your great kindness  
you may restore (name) in your heavenly kingdom  
according to your wisdom, which goes  
beyond our human understanding. Amen.





## Murray and Sydney

Murray was the greatest boy! He loved spending time with my husband and walking with me. He helped with the chores and kept the neighborhood safe. The “c” word took him from us. I can’t wait to see him again!

Sydney’s sole motivation was food! She ate a 9-inch workboot, Christmas balls off the tree, and money out of my purse. She was always into everything! Liver disease got her after she was bitten by a black widow. I know she is herding everyone over the rainbow bridge!

# 1

## *And It Was Very Good*

In the earliest verses of Genesis, darkness covered everything until God created light to separate the darkness from the light. "And God saw that the light was good."

Soon we read that God separated the earth from the seas. "And God saw that it was good." Then God added vegetation, plants, trees, and fruit. "And God saw that it was good." On the fourth day, God put two great lights in the sky: the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night, thus separating light from darkness. "And God saw that it was good." These two great lights, which St. Francis would call "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon," have contributed enormously to the well-being and enjoyment of God's creatures.

On the fifth day, God created sea monsters and birds of all kinds. "And God saw that it was good." On the sixth day, God made land creatures of every kind: "cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind. And God saw that it was good." Also on the sixth day, God made human beings, saying, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth."

Finally, in Genesis 1:31, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." This "very good" label, which God places upon both human and nonhuman creatures, seems to be an argument for God's desire to have *both* classes of creatures share in the original Garden of Paradise, where peace and harmony reigned between God and human beings, upon creature and creature. Certainly, God is not going to create—and then ignore—what he perceives as "very good" creatures!

God does *everything* out of love, and this includes the creation of our world. God's words to the people of Israel in Jeremiah 31:3 also come to mind: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." The Psalms, too, remind us that God's "steadfast love endures forever." In Psalm 136 alone, the refrain "his steadfast love endures forever" is repeated twenty-five times.

Our God is a God of overflowing love, goodness, and beauty who is ready to give over everything to those he loves. This goodness is reflected in the whole family of creation. When God says of any creature, whether human or

## 16 *I Will See You in Heaven*

nonhuman, that it is "good" or "very good," it is not simply a matter of moral goodness. The creature also has an inherent goodness and beauty—a beauty that reflects God, who is Beauty itself. Surely the Creator would not suddenly stop loving and caring for the creatures he had put into existence with so much care.





# Renny

We are heartbroken to have lost Renny, the sweetest boy ever.

# 2

## *The Happiness Principle*

In the original picture we have of the Garden of Eden before the fall, Adam and Eve and all the creatures are living together happily in peace and harmony in the presence of a loving God—a wonderful and insightful glimpse of the paradise that is to come.

It makes sense to me that the same loving Creator who arranged for these animals and other nonhuman creatures to enjoy happiness in the original Garden would not want to exclude them from the *final* paradise. If they were happy and enjoying God's presence, according to their abilities, in that first Garden, God would want them to be happy and enjoy the same in the restored garden.

Father Don Miller, a Franciscan colleague of mine, recently told me a sad story from his childhood. Don's dog Boots, a young German Shepherd, was tragically killed by a car he had been chasing.

"I was devastated," recalls Don, who was nine years old at the time. "On the verge of tears, I asked my parents: 'Is Boots in heaven and will I see him there some day?'"

"This little episode happened in Peoria, Illinois, and my parents took me downtown to Sacred Heart Church to talk with Father Baldwin Schulte, the Franciscan pastor there. I asked Fr. Baldwin whether I would see Boots in heaven. He thought for a moment, and then he turned to me and said: 'Yes, you will see your dog in heaven—if that is what it takes to make you happy.'"

Don reflects, "Now as I look back as an adult, I believe Fr. Baldwin's answer was very wise. Instead of giving me a lot of theology, he basically said that in heaven God will see to it that all who live there are supremely happy. It was a very sound and sensitive answer for me at that time. Once we pass on to the next life and see God face to face, as the glorious source of all that exists, those kinds of questions may not seem so important."

Just as the original Creation was very good with animals as a part of it, so too, it seems, our future lives will be very good and will include animals. No one should presume to tell you or me that we will never again see our pets that died many years ago.

I recall learning in my theology classes that in God there is no past, present, or future. There is only an "eternal now." Who can say, therefore, that the God who created all things does not hold in memory all the creatures God has ever made? They were created as good, all of creation was very good together, and there's no reason why that should change in the eternal future.

The creation story in Genesis says nothing about the future, only about those initial moments when all things were made. But we wonder what will happen in the afterlife—in the new heaven and the new earth that is to come? This is a big-time mystery. There are many things about our future paradise that surpass human understanding. We simply do not know what awaits us in heaven. As St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "We teach what scripture calls: *the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him*" (1 Cor. 2:9 JB).

The Garden of Eden is not only a story of the way the world was created; it is also a metaphor for the final paradise that our loving Creator envisioned before time began.





# Dakota

Dakota means “friend” and it was the perfect name for her. A mix of Husky, German shepherd, and Lab, she was a rescue puppy who rescued us. She was our first “child” and became our children’s nanny—a gift of unconditional love to our entire family. We can’t wait to see her again.