

*I Will
See
You in
Heaven*

CAT LOVER'S EDITION !

Friar Jack Wintz



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I Will See You in Heaven (Cat Lyver's Edition)

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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: Cat Lover's Edition! is also designed to help those who have recently lost a cat by keeping it in loving remembrance. You may want to use the following Presentation Page.

Presented to

By _____

In Loving Remembrance of

On This Day



Jackson

Jackson recently passed away. He was diagnosed with cancer, and as much as I didn't want to say goodbye I knew I couldn't let him suffer. In this picture he is with his sister Bailey. I know he has crossed the Rainbow Bridge and has been restored to perfect health—having fun as he waits for me to hold and hug him.



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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:

Jon lives in Vermont, where a few years ago he faced the difficult decisions and moments that come with attending to a close friend that is dying. That friend was Jon's cat, Katana.

Katana was a Maine Coon mix Jon adopted from a co-worker. Larry and his wife, Julie, were leaving Vermont for a new job and home in Baltimore, and they were afraid to take a long car ride with a sensitive cat that scares easily.

"Would you mind taking our cat?" Larry asked Jon at the office one day. Jon thought back to the three cats he'd had before, remembering them fondly, and wondered if it was time once again to share his life with a feline friend.

"Yes, of course," he said without much hesitation.

But from the moment that Katana came into Jon's life, she was skittish. Larry had warned him.

"We got her from a shelter, and they said she'd been abused. In fact, whoever brought her to the shelter found her on the street locked under the hood of a car. Some kids playing a terrible prank, I suppose," Larry explained.

"We named her, Katana. *Katana* means 'little,' in Hebrew." He and Julie were Jewish. "She never grew to the normal size for her breed," Larry said.

When Katana came home, Jon's two kids immediately began reaching out to her. The kids were little, too, and of course they wanted to hold their new cat. She would come near, only to then quickly run away to a corner or under a bed. The kids were patient, and in time, Katana would sit briefly on one of their laps. The kids knew not to pet her very much, at first, just to allow her to stand or sit on their laps, getting comfortable. If they touched her too much, you could tell that the cat felt trapped, and she would run away. But the kids learned. And they learned to love Katana deeply—and over several years—eventually could pet her a whole lot.

Last year, at the age of fourteen, Katana became very ill. She lost a lot of weight and had trouble moving around the house. They took her to the vet, who said that the time had come. So with great sadness, they allowed the vet to use an injection to bring Katana's suffering to an end. The kids cried

and so did Jon. But they remembered her beautiful eyes and how she seemed to understand so well how much they loved her.

"I still miss her when I think about it," Jon says. "And I know the kids miss her friendship all the time. Katana helped them to see that being vulnerable is normal and just fine."



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 cat 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

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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?



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.



Annabelle

Annabelle was shot when she was a kitten and lived with two pellets in her spine. We rescued her at age two, and once she was sure she was safe and loved, she always looked out for people who might need extra affection and company.

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

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.

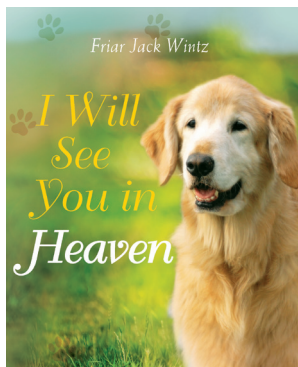




Moo

Here's my baby who passed last year after a year of sickness. Moo was the sweetest thing ever!

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in heaven!”*

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