

Mo. Rebecca: Good morning, you guys. Can everybody turn around and look at me? Do you know what today, what we're celebrating today?

Children: Animal day.

Mo. Rebecca: Animal day. What else?

Mo. Rebecca: The blessing of St. Francis? Hmm. What did we bring with us today? What did we bring? Animals. The stuffed variety here. One real one. Good, and you brought your actual dog. Look at that. Well, does anybody know that there's a picture of St. Francis in the story we just heard in our church? Does anybody know where that picture is?

Children: In a book.

Mo. Rebecca: In the church somewhere?

Children: In the church somewhere.

Mo. Rebecca: John, do you know? Good guess.

Children: The windows?

Mo. Rebecca: Henry, do you see it?

Children: I see it, I see it.

Mo. Rebecca: Wait, wait, wait, look this way. Everybody look up. Grownups, look to your left, up high. What is that? Who is that? Do you see?

Children: St. Francis.

Mo. Rebecca: It's St. Francis. Who's with him? Who's with him?

Children: The wolf.

Mo. Rebecca: The wolf is right there. Did you know that?

Children: Yes.

Mo. Rebecca: Do you know, St. Francis loved to have fun. St. Francis thought it was very important to be joyful and to be playful. Francis would dance around and talk and sing to the animals and to anybody who would hear him, and Francis loved animals. He thought the animals could teach us. Do you think animals can teach you something?

Children: Yeah.

Mo. Rebecca: Yeah? Maybe teach us a little bit about God?

Children: Right up there.

Mo. Rebecca: Yeah! God is our creator, right? God wants us to be kind to all creatures, all people, all things, right?

Children: Even bees.

Mo. Rebecca: Even bees? Is that what you said? I have a harder time with that. I'm allergic, but ...

Children: Even the wolves.

Mo. Rebecca: Even the wolves. Very good, Abbey. Since Francis liked us to be playful, I'm going to ask you to be playful for a minute, because you know what? You kids can teach us grownups how to remember to be playful, so I want you to think ... First of all, who likes animals? Raise your hand if you like an animal. Alright, grownups too, come on. Ah, look at all those grownups. Alright. You like animals. Alright, now I want everybody to stop and think, to yourself, quietly, about an animal you really like, okay? Picture the animal you really like, okay? Don't tell us, don't tell us yet. Do you have the animal in your mind?

Children: Yes.

Mo. Rebecca: Okay, I have the animal in my mind. Now, I need a volunteer who's brave to stand up and act out your animal, but don't make any noise. No noise. Just the actions you think the animal would make, okay? No noise, no noise. Alright, Charlotte, do you want to do that for us? Okay, we're all gonna watch Charlotte and we're gonna guess. We're gonna guess what animal she is. Okay, she's crawling.

Children: Cat.

Mo. Rebecca: Is it a cat?

Children: No.

Mo. Rebecca: No, keep going.

Children: Cheetah.

Mo. Rebecca: A cheetah. No. What else? What else? What are your guesses?

Children: Monkeys.

Mo. Rebecca: A horse? A bunny. Horse? Yay! Very good horse. Okay, let's get another one. Okay, Vigo, I'm gonna have you do one. Can you act out your animal?

Children: Frog.

Mo. Rebecca: Yeah, it was so good. Good job. Okay, let's do one more. Mikey, will you do it for us? Okay, show us. What is it?

Children: A wolf.

Mo. Rebecca: It is a wolf. You were gonna howl. It was a silent howl. Alright, okay, let me hear your wolf howl. Come on, everybody. Let me hear it. Alright, very good. Very good. Alright. Oh wow, the choir. It's very good too. Wow, you guys are amazing animals. You know what? We all have to remember to have fun and ... You are very good at that, to have fun and to play. What if being fun and having time to play was a spiritual discipline? I think it is, everybody. I think it is. Yes, to enjoy us, and you guys are such wonderful teachers because you know what? Everybody out here is remembering how fun it is to have that abandon and to jump up and be a frog or a wolf or, what were you? A horse. Yeah, right? Now, Francis also told us to be kind to the animals. Why do you think it's important to be kind to animals? Do you think animals matter? Why do you think?

Children: I think you should be kind to animals no matter what they do because back then they used to hit the horses with thorns or whatever.

Mo. Rebecca: Yeah, so you wouldn't want to hit them, right?

Children: No, because then they could kick you or....

Mo. Rebecca: Oh, I see, so no matter what the animals do, she says, we should be kind, right? We should be kind. Do you think the animals matter to God?

Children: Yes.

Mo. Rebecca: Yeah?

Children: God created them.

Mo. Rebecca: Because God created them. Gold star. That's right. We are all created by God, aren't we? All the creatures. Yeah. Do you guys have animals you need to take care of at home or at school or anything?

Children: Yes.

Mo. Rebecca: Yes. What can you do to be kind to animals? What can you do? Yeah.

Children: Pet them.

Mo. Rebecca: Pet them. What else? What else do you need to do for your animals? Yeah.

Children: You need to feed them.

Mo. Rebecca: Feed them.

Children: Wash them.

Mo. Rebecca: That's right, was them. Give them a bath. That one's harder to do. Yeah.

Children: Cats don't like to do it.

Mo. Rebecca: Cats don't like baths?

Children: Nope.

Mo. Rebecca: They don't, they don't.

Children: My cat loves baths.

Mo. Rebecca: Oh?

Children: He literally swims in it.

Mo. Rebecca: Very good, you guys. Who is this?

Children: Tuggles.

Mo. Rebecca: Tuggles. Hello, everyone. Oh, look at all your great creatures. When we are kind to animals, when we're kind to animals, it helps us learn how to be kind to people too, doesn't it? It reminds us to be kind to everybody, even the small little creatures.

Children: Animals are little like apes and gorillas, they're a little like us.

Mo. Rebecca: Yeah, the apes and gorillas like us. You guys, you guys are so smart. You know so many ... They might eat different, yes. Okay, we're gonna say a prayer and you guys are gonna repeat after me to close us, so can we get quiet and still? I know we're excited. We're gonna put our hands together, we're gonna close our eyes and I'm gonna have you repeat after me, okay? I'll say words and then you say them. Dear God ...

Children: Dear God.

Mo. Rebecca: Thank you.

Children: Thank you.

Mo. Rebecca: For all the animals.

Children: For all the animals.

Mo. Rebecca: For St. Francis ...

Children: For St. Francis ...

Mo. Rebecca: ... And for wanting us to learn to be playful.

Children: ... And for wanting us to learn to be playful.

Mo. Rebecca: So that we can enjoy ...

Children: So that we can enjoy ...

Mo. Rebecca: You ...

Children: You ...

Mo. Rebecca: Each other ...

Children: Each other ...

Mo. Rebecca: ... And our lives.

Children: ... And our lives.

Mo. Rebecca: In Jesus' name.

Children: In Jesus' name.

Mo. Rebecca: Amen.

Children: Amen.

Mo. Rebecca: Thanks, you guys. Go back to your places.