

St. Francis Day Ideas

- Choose a date and time for the St. Francis Day celebration where you will have optimal guests and visitors. (Example, in the evening when it's cooler or convert your latest Sunday morning service to a casual outdoor pet blessing.)
- Think about the value of having the celebration at a park verses your church. Would you receive more visitors in a public area? Could you hand out information about your church if it is offsite? YES
- Communicate the same announcement in all your communication channels: Sunday bulletins, website, e-mail lists, newsletter and Sunday announcement time.
- Don't forget to run an ad in your local newspaper the week or days before the event. A short story with a picture would be best. (Take a picture of a parishioner and his and her pet if you don't have any photos from years past and take it to the newspaper)
- Give out St. Francis medals for pet collars sold by many stores. Don't forget to bless all the medals before they are given to the proud owners. Sources:
 - Tonini Church Supply, Co in Louisville, KY., phone: 1-800-626-3545. The cost is \$21.00 per hundred. They are 3/4" tall and 1/2" wide and two-sided. Catalogue item number is #66-3001
 - Search Catholic stores online for varieties of medals.
- Give out dog treats. You can even find easy recipes to bake at www.hungrymutt.com
- Have your children's ministry or youth group make dog bone shaped cookies ahead of time. (For the owners, not the pets) Set up a table where children could decorate them with squeeze icing tubes and sprinkles.
- Have an ice cooler of water bottles. Print & stick (name-tag size) labels over them with your church name, address, website and mission or vision statement. Have an ice cooler of ice just for pets.
- Have a table of clay and let children make their pet's shape to take with them. Even incorporate this in the celebration with a blessing.
- Include printed prayers for animals in your services (so people can take them home) visit the website for the Episcopal Network for Animal Welfare www.franciscan-anglican.com/enaw/index.htm

- Sponsor an adoption event with a local shelter or rescue group (note, an adoption event usually takes 3-4 hours; you could co-ordinate such an event with other weekend parish activities)
- During your Blessing of the Animals service, invite a local shelter or rescue group to bring some of its adoptable animals to the service for a blessing. Introduce the animals and their handlers during the service and announce that the animals are available for adoption – and that they have lots of friends also available for adoption through the shelter or rescue group.
- “Adopt” a local shelter or rescue group. Uphold the group in prayer; sponsor fund-raisers – try a car wash/pet-wash; collect toys, food and blankets for consecutive Sundays leading up to the service and ask everyone to bring a bag of pet food to the actual pet blessing. Give the collection to your “adopted” group as part of the service.
- Get the community involved:
 - Make flyers advertising the service
 - Take flyers to veterinarians, pet hospitals and kennel boarding locations in your area
 - Ask a local Veterinarian if they would like to give free vaccinations along with his or her business cards.
 - Call or meet with your local humane society or veterinarian and ask if they would like to come give a 5 minute presentation about pet wellness during the service. (If they come, communicate in all your information that they are a co-sponsor of the pet blessing)
- Take plenty of pictures for next year so that you can repeat this event year after year.

