



Imagine this scene: a child, with tears in his eyes, kneeling by his bed, clasping his hands, and asking God to heal his sick dog. His mother, watching him, wonders, “Is it okay to pray for animals? Does it make sense? Or is it a theological mistake?” This is a question many Catholics ask, but whose answer has been obscured over time.

## **The Soul of Animals: Do They Have a Spirit or Just Instinct?**

From the earliest centuries, the Church has taught that only human beings have an immortal soul, created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Saint Thomas Aquinas, in his monumental work *Summa Theologica*, explains that animals do have a soul, but not an immortal one like ours. Their souls are sensitive and perish at death, whereas ours, endowed with reason and will, remain for eternity.

But this does not mean that animals are mere objects without value. Saint Francis of Assisi, the great lover of Creation, called creatures “little brothers,” recognizing in them the beauty of God. In the Bible, we see how the Lord cares for animals:

*“Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep. You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.”* (Psalm 36:6)

## **Can We Pray for Animals? The Balance Between Faith and Compassion**

Some Christians have mistakenly believed that praying for animals is a theological deviation, but this is not true. The Church teaches that we can ask God for anything good, and Creation is good (Genesis 1:31).

Saint John Paul II, in a 1990 audience, stated that “animals also possess the breath of life received from God.” Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, reminded us that how we treat animals reflects our moral attitude. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, calls us to lovingly care for Creation.

Therefore, praying for our animals is not an error but an expression of love and gratitude to God, who entrusted them to us. We do not pray for their eternal salvation, as they do not have the same destiny as us, but we can certainly ask for their well-being and protection in this life.



## **The Saints and Their Relationship with Animals**

Throughout history, many saints have shown deep love for animals. Saint Martin de Porres had a hospital for sick dogs and cats. Saint Gertrude of Nivelles is the patron saint of cats and was said to protect felines from mice and plagues. Saint Philip Neri used to feed birds and talk to them. How could these saints be so compassionate toward animals if God did not care for their well-being?

## **Conclusion: A Pious Heart That Prays for All of Creation**

It is not a sin to pray for an animal; what would be a mistake is placing animals above human beings or attributing to them a destiny they do not have. Praying for our pets can be an act of love and gratitude toward God, who has given them to us as companions and reflections of His goodness.

So, if you ever find yourself next to your sick dog or see an animal suffering, do not hesitate to lift a prayer to God. He is the Lord of all Creation and delights in seeing us act with love, even toward the smallest of His creatures.