

Feast of St. Francis of Assisi blessing for pets draws animals, owners

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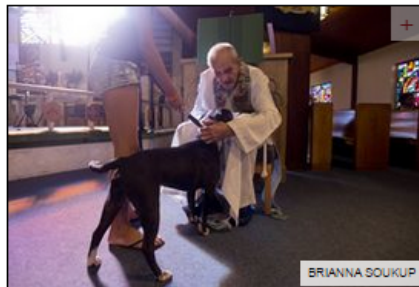
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By Julius Whigham II - Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

BOYNTON BEACH —

By the dozens they lined up with their owners to receive their blessings.

Barks and a few squeals filled St. Joseph's Episcopal Church Sunday afternoon for the church's annual Blessing of the Animals service.



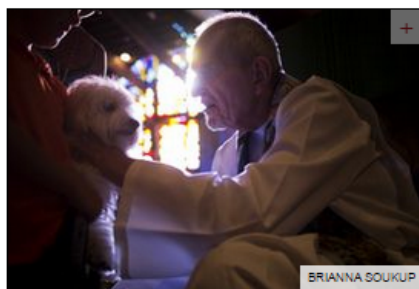
Father Mike Cassell blesses Desiree Robinson's dog, Egor, at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. ... [Read More](#)

Dogs, cats, rabbits and other animals big and small filled pews and aisles as the church celebrated its 20th anniversary of the event. Each year, Catholic, Episcopalian and other Christian denominations hold a blessing of animals on or near Oct. 4 to mark the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals.

"It is special to us because the Episcopal denomination prides itself in our concern for the environment, including God's creatures," said the Rev. Marty Zlatic, who oversaw the

blessing of the animals for the 15th year.

Afternoon rain showers put a damper on plans for a pet parade, forcing activities inside. But that didn't stop a number of owners from arriving to have their pets blessed.



Father Mike Cassell blesses peoples beloved pets at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, ... [Read More](#)

Larry Cianciolo, a member of the church, attended the event with his 5-year-old Akita-hound mix, Buddy. Cianciolo rescued Buddy as a puppy after finding him near a lake behind his house.

"I feel that God has a blessing for all, not only humans, but animals as well so I want him to be protected as much as I possibly can," Cianciolo said. "If a blessing will do it, then that makes me happy."

Jane Speyer, of Delray Beach, brought her 1-year Dachshund mix, Appa, to Sunday's blessing.

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Photos: Blessing of the Animals at St. Joseph's 📷

"He's my first dog and I've never have had an opportunity to do this before so I really wanted to see what it's about," she said. "He loves being around other dogs so it's a good little social hour as well. He's the closest thing I have to a kid, so it's very important to me that he's a part of my religious experience as well."

Joe Lederer, of Boynton Beach, and his wife, Diane, came to the service with their dog Buddy, a 1-year-old shih tzu, and Bailey, 1-year-old Maltese.

"We've been coming for the last three years," he said.



Chicken the malakin cockatoo stands on his owner David Hoover's leg in the front row at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th ... [Read More](#)

Sunday's service was dedicated to the memory of Elliott Williams, a longtime volunteer who passed away last year. Williams and his wife, Dianne, helped the event to grow in popularity in recent years, event co-chair Karen Antonucci said. Dianne received a special award.

Community volunteer Susan Butler and the Little Rex Foundation received the church's 2015 St. Francis Award for their work in rescuing unwanted, neglected and critically ill dogs.



BRIANNA SOUKUP

Chicken the malakin cockatoo stands on his owner David Hoover's leg in the front row at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Photos: Blessing of the Animals

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Terry St. Angelo, of South Beach, adjusts her dog Nevada's hat before service at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. Nevada travels all over the country and competes in dog fashion shows. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



Photos: Blessing of the Animals

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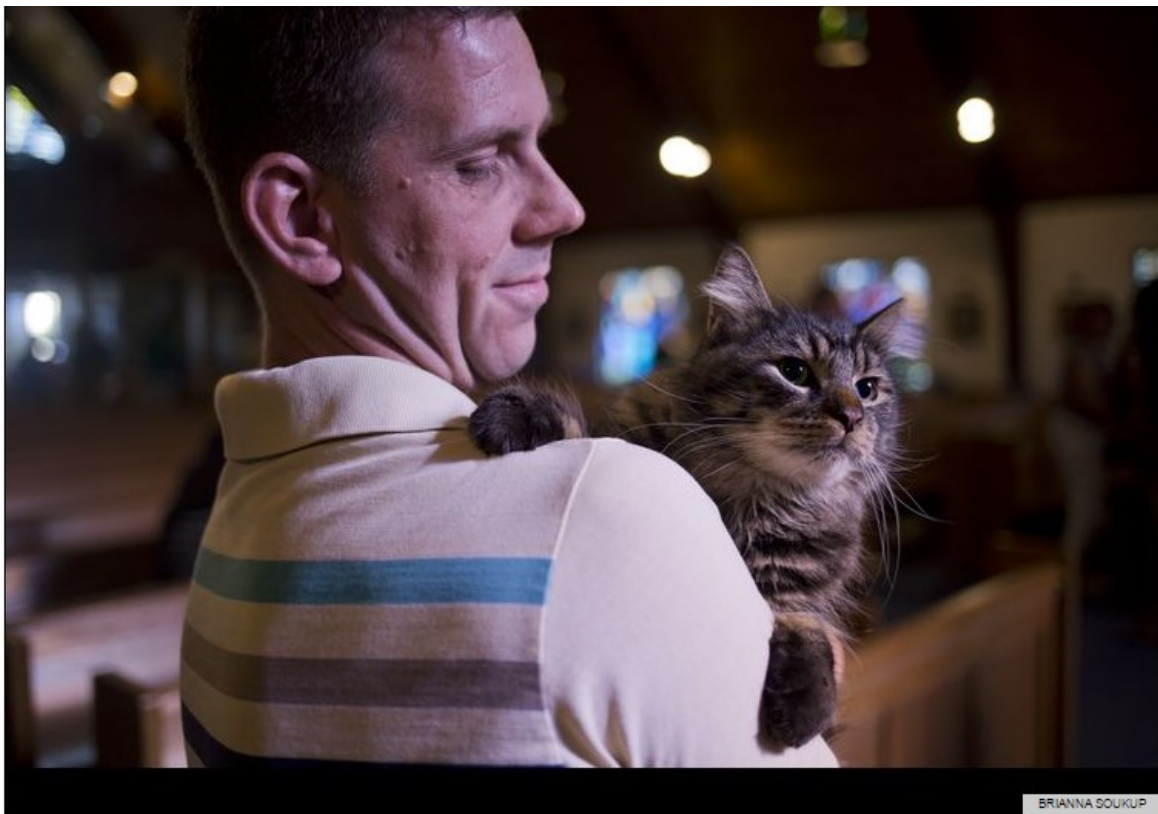
David Hoover and his malakin cockatoo, Chicken, head inside St. Joseph's Episcopal Church for the 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



Photos: Blessing of the Animals

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Father Mike Cassell blesses Julie Hyde's dog, Uki, at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. Father Cassell started this yearly service in 1995. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Allen Borden holds his cat Ronin after he was blessed at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Chicken the malakin cockatoo stands on his owner David Hoover's leg in the front row at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)

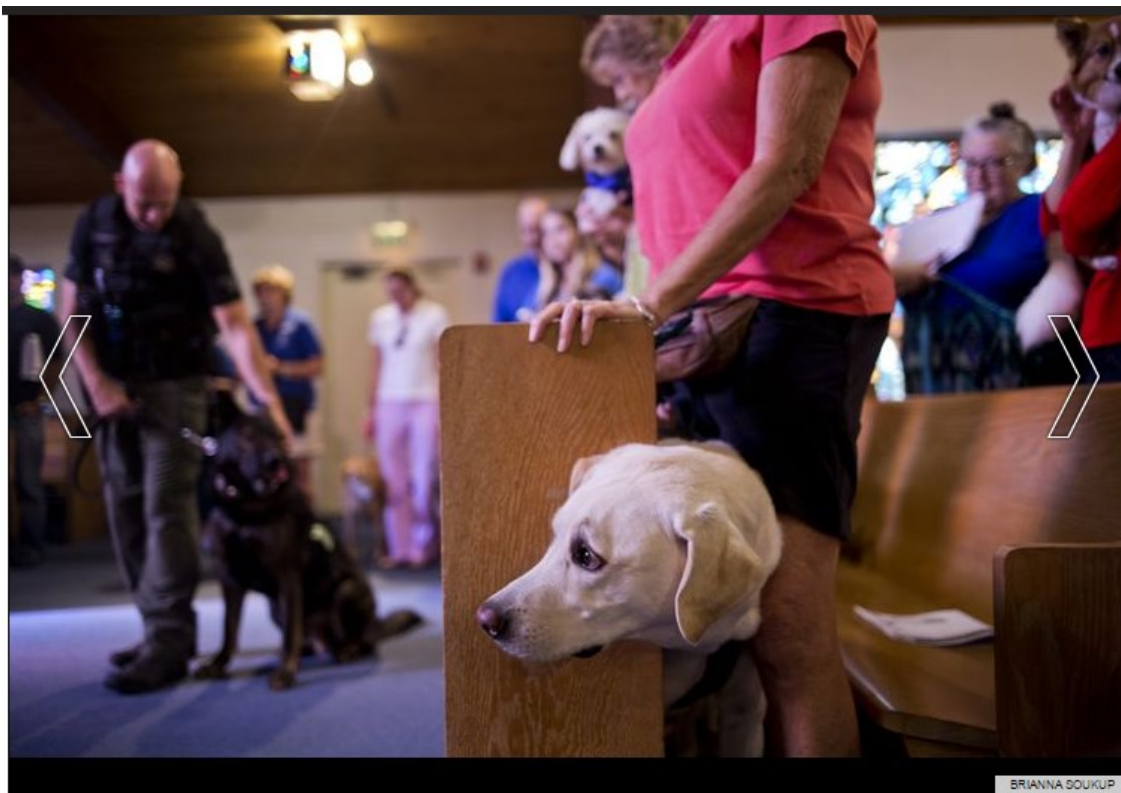


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Father Mike Cassell blesses Desiree Robinson's dog, Egor, at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. Father Cassell started this yearly service in 1995. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Pups wait in the front row at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Donald Vaillancourt, of Delray Beach, holds his dog Frosty before service at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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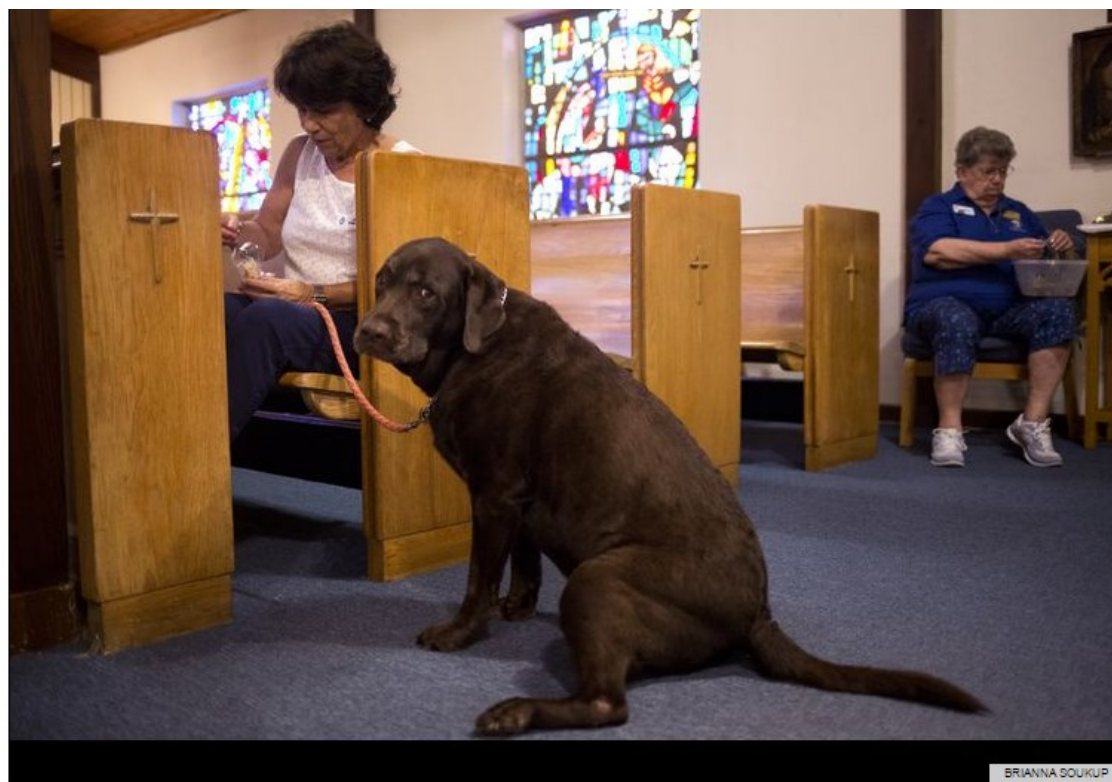
People gather outside of St. Joseph's Episcopal Church for the 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Tessa Shore, 9, of Boynton Beach, with her dog, Brinx, before service at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Joan Therien, of Boynton Beach, and her dog, Kara, at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. Therien has been attending the service for 18 years. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Pets and their owners fill the pews at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Desiree Robinson and her dog, Egor, at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)

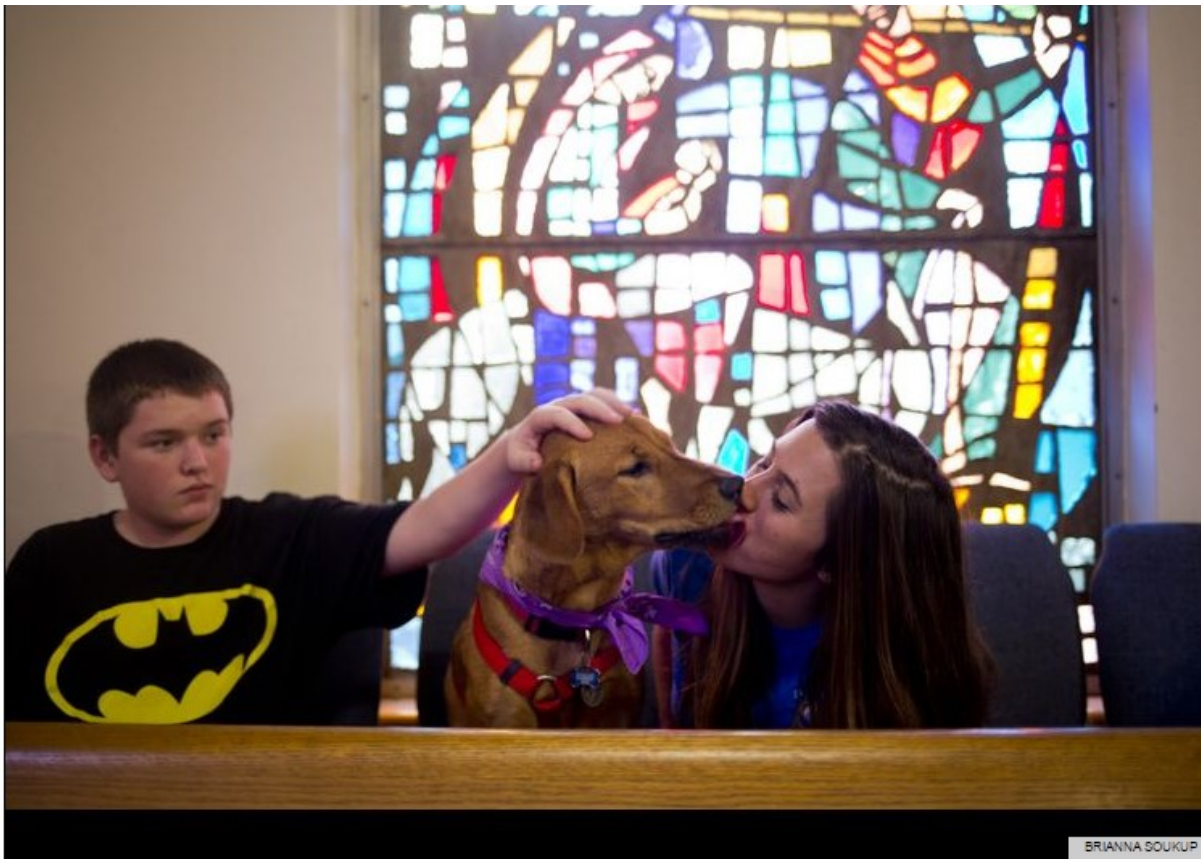


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Bryan Benner and Savannah Benner, of Boynton Beach, with their dog Lou Lu at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Attendees sing along with the youth choir at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)

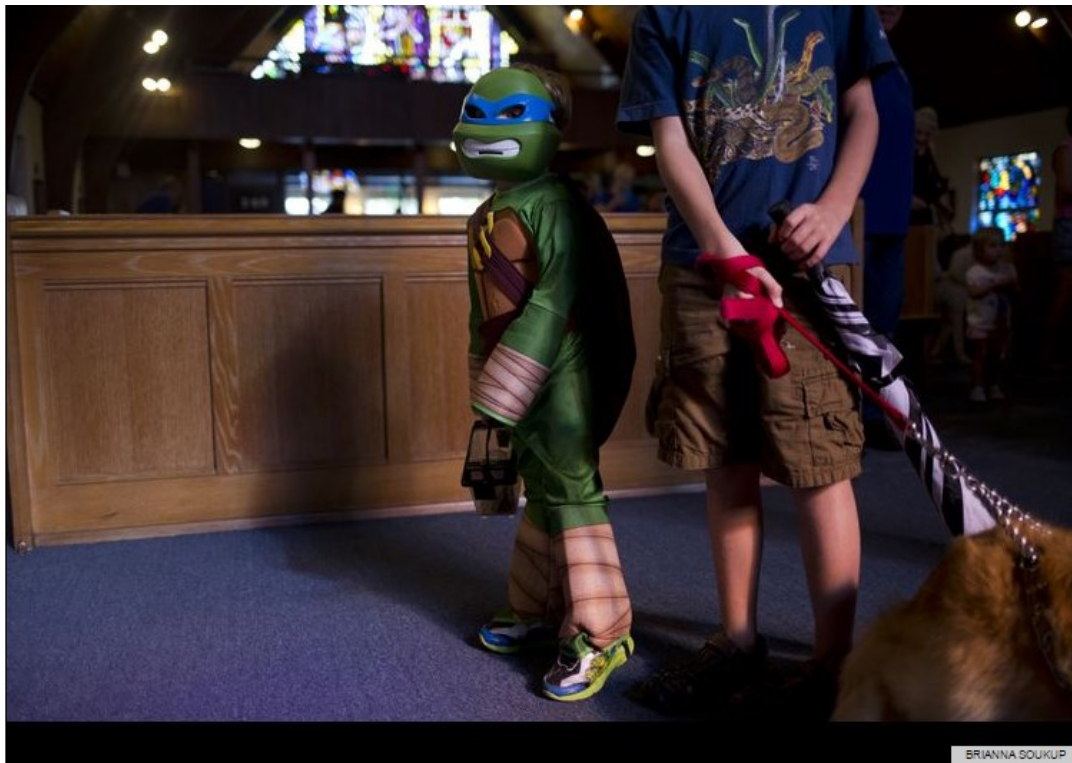


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Father Mike Cassell blesses peoples beloved pets at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Anthony Fruge, 4, of Jupiter, is dressed as a ninja turtle to stand in for his pet turtle he had to leave at home during St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna

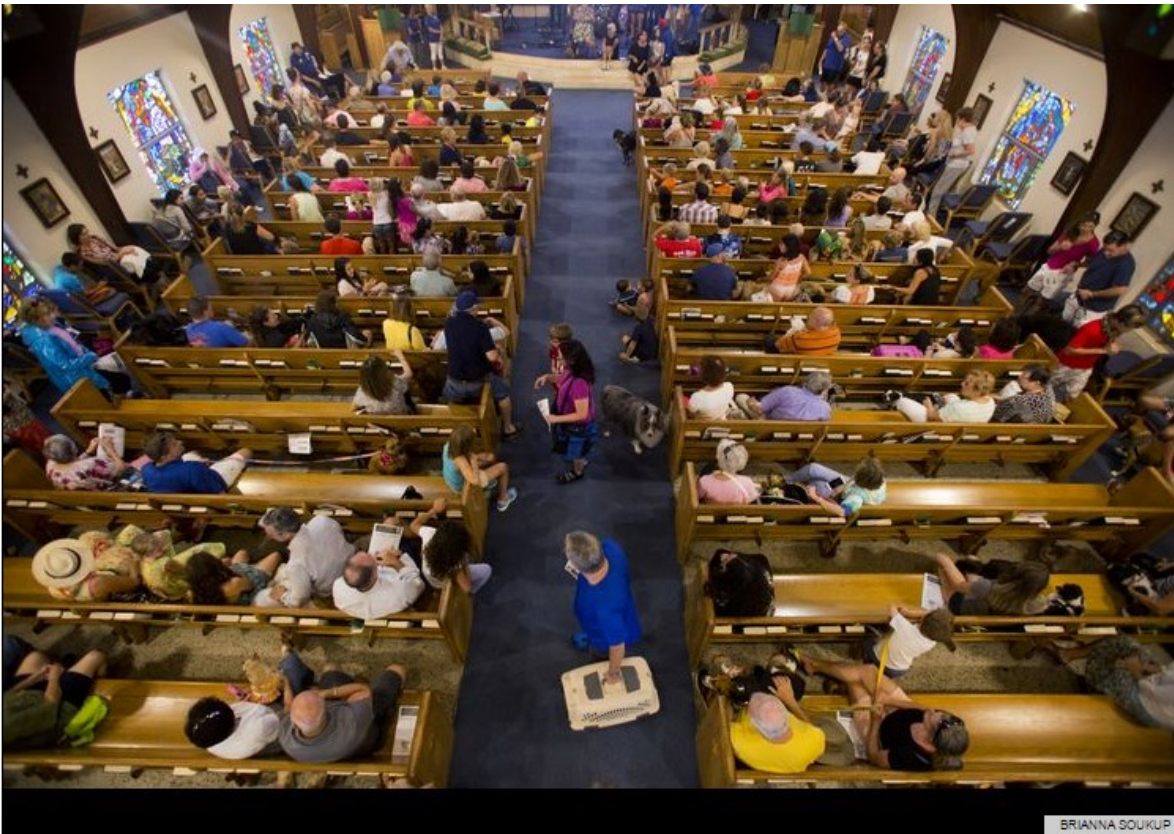


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Romeo is blessed by Father Marty Zlatic at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Pets and their owners fill the pews at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Sydnie Jones, 8, of Lake Worth, takes her dog Coco to get blessed by Father Marty Zlatic at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Evelyn Borden, 14, takes her dog, Meili, to get blessed by Father Mike Cassell at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)

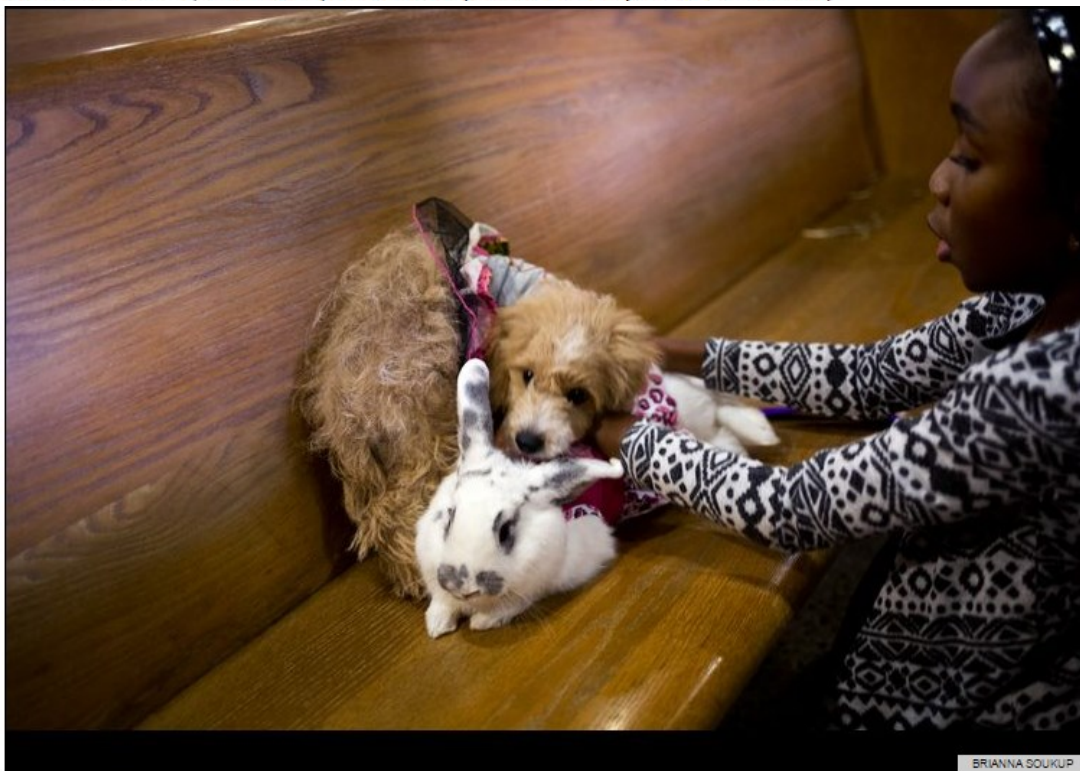


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Father Marty Zlatic blesses Sydnie Jones' bunny, Flower, at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)



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Sydnie Jones, 8, of Lake Worth, with her dog Coco and bunny Flower at St. Joseph's Episcopal Church 20th annual Blessing of the Animals on Oct. 4, 2015 in Boynton Beach. (Brianna Soukup/Palm Beach Post)