

Sermon: Mirrors of Divinity
Scripture: Psalm 146
Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans
Date: OCTober 19, 2025

The 13th-century mystic German Benedictine nun, Hildegard of Bingen, who is the patron saint of musicians, writers and ecology was very clear that creation itself was a manifestation of God, a God of love and healing and grace and as a result plants could heal the human body, that certain gemstones had restorative properties when held in the hand or in the mouth. She wrote extensively about fish and the health benefits of eating fish but only, she made the point, from clean and healthy waters. She wrote - "all living creatures are sparks from the radiation of God's brilliance, emerging from God like the rays of the sun." All living creatures emerge from God like the rays of the sun. Isn't that a beautiful image?

It's one of the most consistent and universal teachings of all the Christian mystics like Hildegard, Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckart and more recent ones like Simone Weil and Thomas Merton - the unified, intricately interconnected nature of the natural world, in fact of existence itself. But somehow in the west we lost sight of this deep wisdom and feel into exclusively dualistic notions of the mind and body, the earth and heaven, physicality and spirituality, human and animal; these rigid categories that led us to believe erroneously that we were separate, isolated, independent, set apart, and then... set over and against... instead of intricately and deeply dependent and interpenetrating one with another - male over and against female, white over and against black, human over and against nature. There have been good things and benefits that have

arisen out of our capacity to objectify the world around us but also great damage done. And so we all know what is needed now more than ever is a turning from the illusion, the lie of our separateness to the truth of our interdependence. We are not separate, isolated individual selves, but we are interconnected entangled, and as Renee Girard coined it interdividual selves. We are much more inter-dividuals than we are individuals - our matrix of relationships being the defining quality of who we are.

And these animals that we are about to bless here this morning, these “pets” we call them, help us understand this in a beautiful way, for they are so much a part of who we are, aren’t they? They are a part of our inter-dividual selves and they like we are a part of God, we all are sparks from the radiation of God’s brilliance. Hildegard also refers to all creatures as glimmering mirrors of divinity. And because God is one, we are all one and mirroring that divinity on this earth. Who is Jane but Jane-and-Cooper? Who is Maggie but Maggie-and-Gus? Who is..... Who is Ted but Ted-and-Lucky even though Lucky, Ted beloved dog, died this past year, Lucky and Marsha of course are and always will be who Ted is in his inter-dividuality. Because our thinking about death is another place where we separate and isolate, believing that they are separate realities when in fact life and death are deeply interpenetrating in mysterious and beautiful ways, the living with the dead, the dead with the living. The people with us and the people who have passed, the animals with us and the animals who have passed are all fractals of who we are. Amen? Amen!

Ok, so let’s get to the main event here and offer a blessing to these beloved animals around us. Maeve and I are ordained ministers of the church represented by our stoles here and so as we do this blessing of your animals, we are not doing it as our individual selves either, but offering

a blessing to your animal from the whole of Christ's Church...in awe of the fact that, to offer another quote from Hildegard that "every creature is a glittering, glistening mirror of divinity."