Spirituality
EarthBeat



Charlie, Lucy Huh's poodle, plays on the beach in Santa Barbara, California. (Courtesy of Lucy Huh)



by Lucy Huh

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

October 1, 2025

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

This year, I won't be taking my dog Charlie to receive his blessing for the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals. Two months ago, he breathed his last breath after having spent 14 years illuminating this world with grace, devotion and pure love.

Larger than most standard poodles, Charlie often stopped strangers in their tracks. During our walks, people driving by would roll down their windows just to tell me how beautiful he was. Everyone in our neighborhood knew him.

But Charlie was more than beloved — he was sacred, like all creatures born from the loving heart of God.

> Through Charlie, I learned that love is the very essence of God.
>
> Tweet this

The days following his death shattered me. My world had revolved around Charlie's schedule, his needs, his magnificent presence. I couldn't bring myself to walk our familiar routes.

Overcome by grief, I found myself driving with no destination, until something drew me to my church. The parking lot was mysteriously full for a weekday evening. After circling, I finally found a space in a corner where I'd never parked before.



Lucy Huh encountered this St. Francis statue near her parking space at church two days after Charlie died. (Courtesy of Lucy Huh)

As I was pulling in, I froze. There, illuminated in my headlights, stood a small statue of St. Francis of Assisi. I remembered Charlie receiving his St. Francis feast day blessing each year, tail wagging amid the joyful chaos of other beloved pets. A brilliant pastel-hued sunset followed — the kind we'd watched together hundreds of times.

Days later, I requested that our priest bless Charlie's ashes. He held a special prayer service in the eucharistic chapel, blessing Charlie as one of God's beloved creatures whom St. Francis called brother. The priest spoke gently of how Charlie's work as my faithful companion was complete. Charlie was recognized as part of God's beautiful creation, worthy of blessing and reverence.

Charlie taught me that animals, too, carry the divine spark of their creator. As the psalmist writes in Psalm 50:10-11: "The wild animals of the forest are mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine." God numbered Charlie's days as God does for all creatures, and his radiant love was a reflection of the generous goodness that brings all creation into being.

Through Charlie, I learned that love is the very essence of God. His capacity for pure devotion showed me what it means to live selflessly. In his smile, I saw divine joy. In his loyalty, I witnessed sacred faithfulness. In his gentleness, I understood holy compassion.

In remembering Charlie's life and love, I have a renewed desire to embody the prayer of his patron saint:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Advertisement

This story appears in the **Small Earth Stories** feature series. View the full series.