

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

October 6, 2009 at 1:23pm

The blessing of the worms

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NCR Today

SYLVANIA, OHIO ? This year's annual blessing of pets at Sylvania Franciscan Academy had its usual dogs, cats and gerbils, as well as worms. About 60,000 worms.

But these weren't ordinary worms; these were *Eisenia fetida*, or red wiggler worms, that compost food scraps five times more efficiently than ordinary earth worms.

The worms, corralled in 60 plastic tubs and covered with shredded newspaper, were part of a science project begun last school year by 13-year-old Rachel Perzynski.

Perzynski wanted to study how worms speed up the natural cycle of composting and demonstrate how composting can be done indoors by almost anyone, by placing compostable material and worms inside containers.

Perzynski's work won top honors from the annual "eco-sensitivity" competition at the University of Toledo in March. A grant from the BP A+ for Energy Program allowed her to expand to 60,000 worms.

After being blessed ? the academy, which is sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania and Lourdes College, blesses pets on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi every year ? the worms were adopted by school families and taken home where they will compost away in basements, utility rooms and garages.

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