

# Adventures with Orla

Blessing of the Animals

By: Kate McGrath





“Because of the  
dog’s joyfulness, our  
own is increased. It  
is no small gift.”

~Mary Oliver

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# About Orla

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Orla is a ten-year-old Golden Retriever. She has been an Animal Assisted Pet Therapy Dog for the past nine years, visiting patients in hospitals, nursing homes and hospices. Orla has also brought much joy (and distraction) to college students studying for mid-terms and final exams at local colleges. Her sweet and gentle personality are noticeable, although she has a playful side to her as well. She has a history of eating things she is not supposed to, namely chocolate, and has a stubborn streak that sometimes gets the best of her.

Orla has been a gift to her humans and has brought joy and humor to their lives for ten wonderful years.



*About Orla*

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“Huh?” said Laddie.

“It’s Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome!” exclaimed Orla. Her whole body seemed to wiggle and dance as Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome came closer to bless them. And then as Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome got to them, a nice calmness came over Orla and Laddie. They knew this was something very special.

Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome prayed the prayers of blessing, asking God to continue protecting all of the animals and their humans – keeping them healthy, comfortable and safe from harm.

“Gosh,” said Laddie in a whisper. “That was awfully nice! It really made me feel good. Do you think we can do this again next year?” he asked Orla.

“I’m sure we can,” said Orla with a smile.

Orla and Laddie knew that just like them, the other animals were feeling very calm and peaceful. All of the animals there felt very thankful that their humans love them and care for them so much, that they would take the time and set aside a special day to ask God to bless them!

As Orla, Laddie and Kate were leaving, Orla smiled to herself as she thought of all the wonderful blessings that God has given to the world. And in her heart, she said a little prayer to thank God for this very special day!



## Blessing of the Animals

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From inside, Orla could hear the birds chirping, singing their sweet early morning songs. “It’s breakfast time!” thought Orla as she stretched her body, reaching out her front and back legs as far as they could go. She raised her head slowly, able to see out the window across from where she had been sleeping. Orla could see the sun rising – it’s bright orange and yellow rays streaming into the house. Orla yawned as she got up, jumping off the couch, taking her time walking into the kitchen for her first meal of the day.

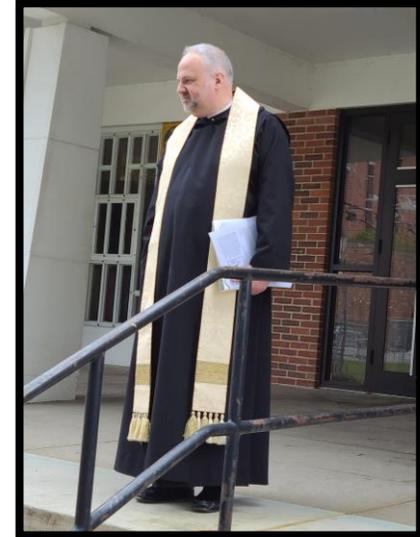


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Orla, now eight, *loved* sleeping – much more than waking up!

Waking up was difficult for Orla ... especially after chasing so many squirrels in her dreams!

There is something peaceful about night time, when everything is still and quiet.



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“We are here!” said Kate.

“Let’s go get our blessing!” exclaimed Orla and Laddie. “Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome are going to ask God for something special for us!” they thought as they walked to the church.

Both Orla and Laddie were surprised by how many people and animals they saw. “Were Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome going to bless *all* of them?” they wondered.

Kate was guiding them through the crowd until she found a good spot for them to sit and stay. Orla and Laddie looked around. Orla started to wag her tail. “Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome are coming!” she said.



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Orla and Laddie ran and jumped into the car.

On their way to St. Raphael's, they looked out the windows and wondered to each other, "Does God bless everyone we see?" "Do all these blessings make God tired?" "Does God bless us every day?" "If God blesses us, why do Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome have to?"



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This morning though was an important morning – and as much as Orla DID NOT like getting up early, she knew that it was the day Fr. Anselm and Fr. Jerome would be blessing all of the animals in Manchester!

Orla knew she wanted to get up to see the sun rise and hear the birds chirp because today is a very happy and joyful day!



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After Orla ate her breakfast, she wanted to go outside and greet the morning. Orla tapped her front paw on the back door so that her humans knew she wanted to go out: *tap, tap, tap*. And for emphasis, Orla let out a loud “*BARK!*” so that her humans knew she was serious!

As soon as Orla’s human, Kate, heard her, she let Orla outside. Orla walked onto the back deck and down the stairs out to the backyard. The air felt cool and fresh as Orla breathed it in. It was a mixture of warm air from the summer season and cold air from the coming winter seasons.



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Kate called Orla and Laddie again ...

“Come on you two! We don’t want to be late.”



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“Oh,” said Laddie. “That’s a good thing!”

“That is a very good thing,” said Orla.



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The grass was cool and damp beneath Orla’s paws.

She sniffed around, smelling the ground beneath her paws. The grass and dirt had a sweet though earthy smell.

Everything was coming to life! The birds were chirping, worms in the ground were beginning to squirm and wiggle, bees were buzzing about, and the autumn flower buds were beginning to open.

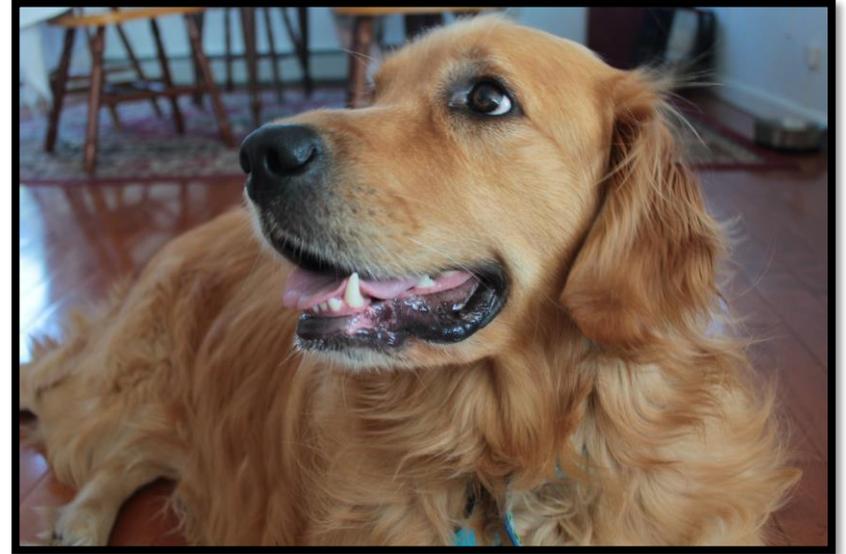


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Orla is a very curious dog ...

Each time she goes outside, she wonders about the things she sees, noises she hears, and the scents that she smells.

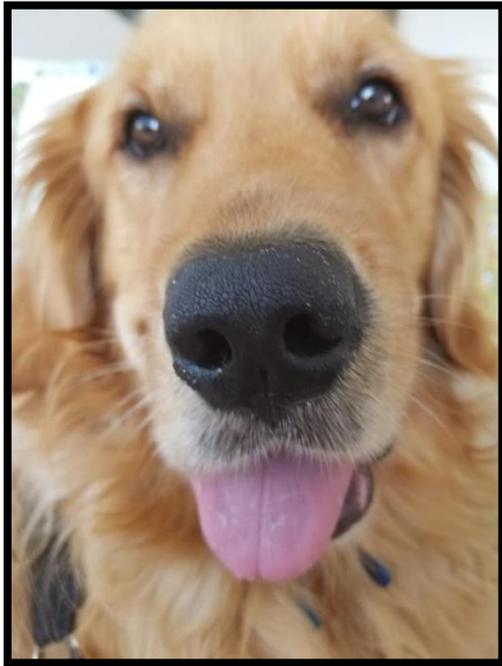
This morning was no different!



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“Why is this day so special?” asked Laddie – with the curiosity of a young puppy.

“Our blessing day is a happy day because our humans ask God to bless us! That means they think we are special and important – and that they know their job as humans is to care for us, and all of the other animals in their care.”



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“Okay Orla and Laddie. Let’s get your leashes.”

Laddie asked Orla where they and their humans were going.

“We are going to church, Laddie,” said Orla. “For our blessing,” she continued.

“Our blessing? What’s our blessing?” asked Laddie.

“A blessing is a prayer,” said Orla. “It’s a prayer that asks God for protection. Our humans take us every year – and it’s a very happy day for us and our humans!”



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Orla wondered about the ground beneath her feet: “Is this the same earth that Jesus walked on, over 2000 years ago?” “What did the ground beneath Jesus’ feet feel like as he walked around different towns?” “Did it smell like the grass and dirt beneath Orla’s paws – or did it have a different smell?”

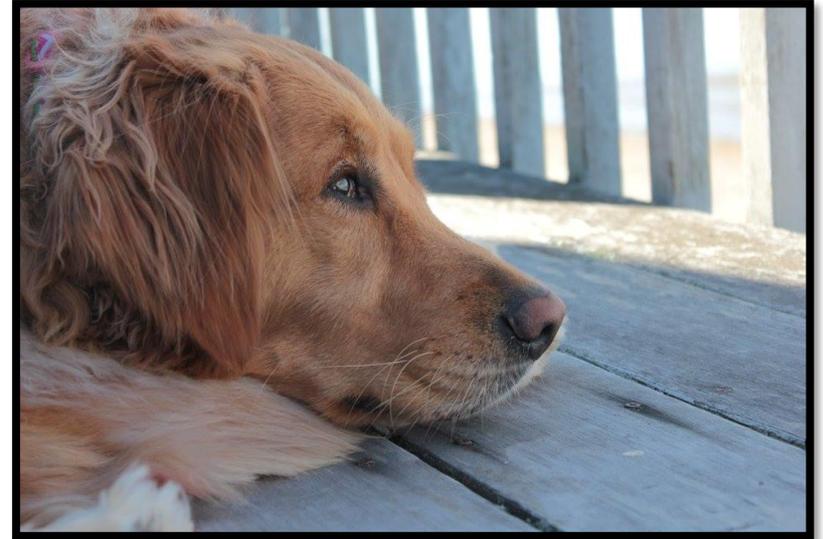
And how about the insects and the birds of the air. “Did Jesus notice the worms and the bees?” “Did he hear the same, sweet songs sung by the birds?” “What did Jesus notice when he was outside?” “Did he notice the worms, birds and bees?”

Orla also wondered about the flowers. Her humans had so many different kinds of plants and flowers in their garden. Orla’s favorite though were the chrysanthemums – which she smelled as she walked around outside. Orla wondered if there were any flowers that Jesus liked. “Did he enjoy the sweet smell of flowers around him?”



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As Orla walked around the backyard, she took in all that she saw, all that she could smell, and all that she could see. “How beautiful!” thought Orla, as she made her way back to the deck. Orla climbed the stairs from the yard to the deck and laid down. She stretched out her body, facing the backyard. From this view, Orla could see the whole yard!



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“Orla, it’s time to go,” said Kate.

As much as Orla wanted to stay outside, she knew she and her humans had someplace important to go and that she and her younger brother, Laddie, were going with them!

“Come on Orla – get up,” said Kate, holding a treat out for Orla.

Orla took her time getting up, trying to take in as much as she could of the outdoors before going inside.