

Animals and Christian Spirituality

One-Day Conference – Saturday, May 24, 2025

9:30 AM – 5:30 PM (in-person or online)

Facultés Loyola, 35 bis, rue de Sèvres, 75006 Paris

Theme:

As Saint Francis of Assisi understood so well, the relationship with animals is a place of authentic spiritual experience, offering companionship with God's creatures very different from ourselves.

Today, studies in ethology and comparative psychology focus increasingly on experiences of grief among animals. Questions surrounding the loss of an animal and the afterlife have become more pressing, and a new form of support known as "animal chaplaincy" is emerging.

Beyond grief, the spiritual experience between humans and animals invites theological exploration.

This interdisciplinary day will explore Christian spirituality in the context of human-animal relationships, with contributions from Christians closely bonded to animals, veterinarians, ethologists, philosophers, biblical scholars, and theologians.

Following the first conference of June 1, 2024 ("*For an Adjusted Human-Animal Relationship: The Case of Animal-Assisted Therapies and Activities*"), this second event continues our three-part cycle.

Organized in collaboration with the **Fraternity for Animal Respect and the Catholic University of Lille**.

Program:

Morning

- **9:15 AM** Welcome
- **9:30–9:40 AM** Introduction – Eric Charmetant, SJ (Philosopher, Facultés Loyola Paris)
- **9:40–10:50 AM**
 - Tetsuro Matsuzawa (Primatologist, Chubu Gakuin University, Japan)
 - *The Evolution of Human Spirituality through the Study of Chimpanzees*
 - (Pending confirmation: *Spirituality and Brotherhood with Chimpanzees*)
- **10:50–11:20 AM**
 - Carlos Pereira (Linguist, Université Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle)
 - *Soul-to-Soul Dialogue in Edith Stein: The Particular Case of Human-Animal Communication*
- **11:20–11:35 AM** Break

- **11:35 AM–12:45 PM Panel:**
 - Nwowe Wanféo, SJ — *Spiritual Experience and Relationship with Animals at the Jesuit Spiritual Ecocenter of Le Châtelard (Lyon)*
 - Philippe Devienne (Veterinarian and Philosopher) — *Care for Companion Animals and Spirituality*
 - Anne-Lucie Oden (Veterinarian) — *Spiritual Experiences in the Relationship with Companion Animals*
 - Estela Torres (Fraternity for Animal Respect) — *Animals and Christian Spiritual Experience*
 - **12:45–2:00 PM Lunch break**
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Afternoon

- **2:00–2:35 PM**
 - Catherine Vialle (Biblical Scholar, Université Catholique de Lille)
 - *Animals Capax Dei: A Reading of Psalm 148*
 - **2:35–3:10 PM**
 - Pascaline Turpin (Philosopher, Université Catholique de Lille)
 - *Francis of Assisi and Animals: Medieval Resonances*
 - **3:10–3:35 PM**
 - Rev. Sarah Bowen (Compassion Consortium, New York, USA)
 - *The Spiritual Potential of Animals: Wonder, Grief, and Transcendence*
 - **3:35–3:50 PM Break**
 - **3:50–4:10 PM**
 - Father Jean-Baptiste Navarro (Catholic Priest, Stains–Pierrefitte)
 - *Relationships with Animals: Parishioner Expectations, Liturgical Celebrations, and Blessings*
 - **4:10–4:45 PM**
 - Rev. Sarah Bowen
 - *Animal Chaplaincy and Interspecies Spirituality: Supporting and Strengthening Bonds*
 - **4:45 PM Roundtable with All Afternoon Speakers**
 - **5:15 PM End**
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Registration

- **Online:** <https://loyolaparis.fr/agenda/leglise-et-les-animaux>
 - **Fee:** €26 (Reduced fee: see website)
 - **Format:** In-person or via Zoom (same price)
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Contact Facultés Loyola

35 bis, rue de Sèvres, 75006 Paris

Phone: +33 1 44 39 75 01

Email: secretariat@loyolaparis.fr

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