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The Lord Is My German Shepherd

Ken Briggs | Oct. 2, 2013 NCR Today

My reach doesn't include the exact reasons why dogs are ineligible to receive consecrated wafers. But it does strike me that dogs often outshine the virtues of their owners and that it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world if they were granted the Bread of Life.

Even the suspicion that it happened,however, caused a furor among those who rule on such matters. Never mind that Greg Reynolds was drummed out of the priesthood by Francis for favoring the ordination of women; in addition, he had to answer charges that he served communion to a German shepherd. A German shepherd, no less, bearing the very image of the One who kept vigil over the flock and searched tirelessly for the lost one? Reynolds denied doing so, therefore, presumably, charges of sacrilege against the shepherd were dropped. Even so, the uproar somehow seems uncalled for in the universe of ultimate justice.

Dogs regularly get pictured in the media for their heroism, their service to the blind and disabled, as vessels of hope to old people and prisoners, as sentinels in vital security, as protectors of young children And as the world knows, dog spelled backwards is .... So in my theologically untutored way, I say, so what if a priest does slip a dog communion now and again. Keepers of Catholic orthodoxy, commence firing in my direction.

People often say they love their dogs more than anything on earth. They are the best people many people ever know. Not infrequently, we feel in their debt, as they shower us with affection we don't deserve and display a desire to meet our needs no matter how much it's tied to treats. The point isn't to idealize them but to recognize that it's not impossible to see them standing in line for communion.

Besides, some of us are named after them. Think of St. Bernard. Or God's Rotweiler.

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