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WORLD ANIMAL DAY

WORLD ANIMAL DAY – A call to all our ‘churches’.

Across the world on October 4th - World Animal Day, many Churches, Temples and Mosques will be holding services which celebrate God’s creation. We invite all religious groups here in the Seychelles to join them. Some in their regular services include an element of prayer for the suffering of creation but on this day services usually focus on four themes:-

1. Repentance for our abuse of and cruelty to animals.
2. Thanksgiving for animal companionship.
3. Celebration of God’s creatures.
4. Compassion for individual animals.

It is not always appreciated that the first SPCA, the first national animal welfare society in the world – came into existence as the result of Christian vision. This society was founded by the Rev Arthur Broome, in June 1824. The first minute book records the declaration that “the

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proceedings of this Society are entirely based on the Christian Faith and on Christian Principles.” Broome, together with other visionaries such as William Wilberforce, the man who spent nearly 50 years of his life fighting to stop the disgrace of slavery, directly changed the moral conscience of a nation and consequently and indirectly the consciences of other nations – by the establishment of sister SPCAs around the world.

Our Seychelles Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will become official members of this marvellous network of dedicated people, during the month of October this year.

It is important to remember that whilst the first SPCA was founded upon Christian principles, other religious groups outside of Christianity also acknowledge that acts of cruelty as being a sin, or of an evil force. I shall mention some here but there are others.

In the Qur’an, there is an explicit acknowledgment that animals form communities like us and that they too, praise their Creator. “There is not an animal on earth, nor a bird that flies on its wings, but they are communities like you..”(6:38). The Qur’an also states that “Kindness to any living creature will be rewarded.”

In Indian traditions, principally Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, there is the central idea of AHIMSA – translated by Gandhi as “nonviolence” or “non-injury”. Although this idea is variously understood, its extension to nonhuman life forms has never been in doubt. This has given rise to traditions of vegetarianism and abstinence from animal protein. In Buddhism the principle of no killing, or harmlessness, constitutes the first precept. In the Hindu tradition, it has been claimed that “almost all the Hindu scriptures place strong emphasis on the notion that God’s grace can be received by not killing his creatures or harming his creation..” This is also found in Islam. It is my hope at some point in the future to write articles about the various religious groups and examine their treatment of animals but this will suffice for now.

We at the SSPCA ask all peoples of the Seychelles to join with us and celebrate God’s other creatures in both their worship during this week but also in their actions throughout their lives. SSPCA 08.

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