SAINTS, PLEASE COME MARCHING IN

Saint Bernard, John of Chrysostom,
Cuthbert, Basil, Saint Jerome,
And, of course, Francis of Assisi.
The animals need you now
You are quite long overdue
You cannot rest on your withering
Laurels.
Come, and help anew; seek another way
To end the more sophisticated crimes
Than those visited upon your animal
Sisters and brothers
In those far-off ancient and medieval times.
Rise from your graves, put on your sandals
Throw on your robes, take up your rods, your staffs
And come forth marching, marching strong
Music from the heavens, trumpets and cymbals —
Never, never such a band...

There's much to learn as you march along
Many hard sights to see—
Hogarth's wretched dogs of 1732
Cats hanging from gibbets
Pigs, dressed like men, burned
By the stake's orange, licking flames
For their rooting crimes—
But we have not come much further...
As you will quickly judge.

Harlow's monkeys denied their mothers
Cages as cruel as in any age
Worse than those putting Blake into a rage.
Sows, hens, agile chimpanzees
And staring, moaning caged baboons.
Nervous rats bred for anxiety,
Mice caught in traps of glue,
Kangaroos turned into running shoes.
Whales bleeding, thrashing from harpoons,
Sables, martens held fast in leghold traps,
Beagles and monkeys, bodies radiated,
Coyotes convulsed by poison 1080,
Cast-off smart apes that once communicated,
Lonely, armless monkeys from Silver Spring.
Dolphins trying to tell us something
As they, gasping, finally drown.
Pause, O Saints, look no further around...

Bernard, John, Cuthbert, Basil, Saint Jerome;
The man from Assisi, too,
Make a great noise, a terrible din
Awaken the sleeping—above, below.
Make them forget problems with original sin.
Reach for Lord Buddha, Mohammed, Maimonides, Billy Graham,
All the Popes, your Jesus—and Jerry Falwell, too.
March abreast and the world will follow.
Just keep marching, marching, marching in...

by

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Carol Belanger Graefton.
Old-Fashioned Animal Cuts.
New York: Dover, 1987