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...

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, Sakies, 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, Maimonedes, Billy Graham, All the Popes, your Jesus—and Jerry Falwell, too. March abreast and the world will follow. Just keep marching, marching, marching in....

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.

by Ann Cottrell Free