

## **The Blessing of the Animals**

**October 18, 2014**

We call this service the Blessing of the Animals, but of course it is they who bless us. By their companionship and their extravagant affection (whether we deserve it or not) our animal companions call us to a more morally conscious position in the world. Living with a beloved pet puts us a little bit closer to what Albert Schweitzer called “reverence for life.”

I live with animals. I always have. I got my first kitten when I was about 6 years old and I was forever after a person who would not just desire -- but *require* -- the love of an animal in my home. Except for extremely brief windows of time -- we’re talking weeks -- I have had cats, dogs, iguanas, fish, turtles, rabbits, birds, horses, sheep, ducks, and ferrets. Not all at once!

The truth is, my house feels empty without some other non-human soul present. Something is clearly missing in my domain, life is a little boring, when it’s populated only by human beings. Despite my promises to myself that I’m *not* going to get another dog, well... Despite my adamant protest that I cannot *possibly* take in another abandoned cat... I got ‘em. And I’m so glad I do.

My beloved animal family taught me a reverence for life, no doubt about it. Our second Irish Setter was called *Gaelic* (who answered much more readily to his nickname *Angus* -- because we all have multiple names for our animals, don’t we? More so than with human family! I call my brother by one name, his, which is Will, yet I call my German Shepherd, whose name is Memphis: Doppers, Puppapopulus, Billy, Knucklehead, Lovey, Puppa, and Leave-The-Cat-Alone. That’s his Indian name, like Dances With Wolves... Leave-The-Cat-Alone!).

Anyway, Gaelic was critical to my emotional survival when I was a teenager because I had such rock bottom self-esteem. I didn’t know how to articulate how difficult adolescence was for me, and didn’t have much of a cushion in my mother, God bless her. But I had my dog, and he got me through some of the worst days of my early life. He just listened when I cried to him; he let me hug him and just cry into his messy red hair.

The cats I’ve had over the years taught me about mischievous playfulness and how easy it is to entertain yourself with a bread tie. I mean it! I didn’t have a lot of money in my young adulthood, and seeing a cat have real fun with a simple distraction was life-affirming and helped me create some balanced values about grown-up toys.

Watching my iguana follow the sun around the room made every nice day an interesting treasure hunt.

My sweetheart and I used to joke about our ferrets, who would steal random stuff (keys, glasses, the insole out of one sneaker), who climbed onto every surface and into every hole bigger than a

dime. We'd shrug our shoulders and smile and say, "Yeah, we can't have nice things." But we did, we had *great* things. We lived with actual cartoon characters, those ferrets!

I once asked a colleague to regress me so I could flush out and eliminate some abandonment issues I had. I was living in Manhattan, I was about 28 or 29, and at that time I had a cat named Lucie. During my session I was regressed to an incident buried deep in my memory, which I had only the sketchiest details of, though reliving that memory made it crystal clear. I was about four years old and I saw myself walking behind my parents and uncle on the dirt road behind our New Hampshire lake house. I saw a kitten and followed it, and because I was behind the adults, they didn't see me toddle off after this fluffy attraction. When I next looked around I couldn't see my parents anymore, and I got scared. To a wee kid, distances seem huge; when you can't see someone or something it feels like you'll never see them again, and it's impossibly frightening.

The owner of the cat discovered me, a nice old lady, gave me cookies and milk, and soon my mother came by to collect me (I was only next door). I was so happy to see her, even though the lady was had been perfectly nice to me. But my mother, instead of comforting me expressed *her* fear of losing me -- at least that's what I tell myself it was -- by yelling at me and shaking me by the arm, hauling me off home faster than my chubby little legs could go.

Voila: my abandonment issues.

But the point of this tale is the central role played by the kitten. In the middle of my enlightening regression at age 28 or 29, I suddenly shouted to my colleague, from deep in my trance, "That's Lucie! That kitten is my cat now!" It was unmistakable. At that time I had no real opinion about animal souls or reincarnation. I guess I believed in it, but didn't really have any proof until this moment. I can only describe it as absolute recognition.

So until her dying day some 12 years after that, I teased Lucie for contributing to my decades of emotional imbalance. Suddenly that glint in her green eyes took on a shine of mockery and jest. I loved her.

As a medium, I can confidently promise you that your beloved animals will be with you in Heaven. They may even come back a few times before you get there. I bring in spirit animals in almost every reading I do. Dogs usually come stick their schnozz in my face and then run back and forth between me and the client. Cats wind around my legs or go sit on the lap of their human. I just brought through one Siamese cat who kept howling at me. It felt like a verbal assault! The client was nodding her head and laughing, saying her cat used to follow her from room to room meowing in such a way that she felt he was yelling at her.

I've seen birds, horses, dogs, cats, all manner of livestock. In a phone reading I brought through a grandmother in spirit who was holding a little hamster so gently and with such compassion it almost made me cry. My client said that was her hamster, which her grandmother (who was a cruel and bitter woman when she was alive) had discarded it by putting it outside. And here she

was in the heavenly afterlife, tenderly caring for this blessed little creature and asking her granddaughter for forgiveness.

You needn't ever wonder whether or not animals have a soul. God tells us they do, and I have the Old Testament to back up my statement. This is a passage from the Book of Job:

Ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee,  
And the fowls of the air, and they shall teach thee,  
And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.  
Who among all these does not know  
that the hand of the Lord has done this?  
In whose hand is the soul of every living thing.

*Every living thing.* Not just human living things. The soul of every living thing is in the hand of God.

Woof. Meow. Amen.