



Troubadour

Some years ago a small ecumenical magazine on spirituality and prayer published a series of articles written from the viewpoint of a much loved pet. Subsequently they were compiled in a small book, Ask Angela, by Barbara Ackerman. That book is now out of print, but we were fortunate in obtaining permission to reprint the articles. We hope you will enjoy them and appreciate the wisdom of "Angela."

From the "Ask Angela" series

Teamwork Offering Our Best Selves

Dear Angela,

Every day, I work elbow to elbow and shoulder to shoulder with other people. We often step on each other's toes both literally and figuratively. Could you please offer us some thoughts on teamwork that might help make our workday more pleasant?

Signed,

Coach

Dear Coach,

You have come to the right place to ask about teamwork. As a member of my home team, I am a reliable team player. All of my teammates need me to need them, and I am good. I can be counted on 100 percent at all times to lean on them for their undivided attention and unconditional love. I can be counted on. I pull my own weight.

I wasn't always this way. Up until two years ago, I didn't give a lick about teamwork. I was a Me-generation dog consumed by only one issue: enough. Was I getting it? Was life offering me enough kibbles and chunks? Enough chest rubs?

Two years ago, I made my first friend outside the circle of my home team. This friend taught me some valuable lessons about teamwork, which I am happy to share with you.

Teamwork is the dance of loving kindness. It is a dance when two beings not only put their two heads

continued on next page

Angela, with
Barbara Ackerman --
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Sable Martin
celebrating
Christmas.





Reader's photo of St. Francis garden.

together, but their two hearts as well. When your hearts are joined, you each gracefully step with the same paw at the same moment. The two of you are in sync. The dance of loving kindness is fluid and graceful when each of you give up your solitary needs and concerns for the sake of a greater goal that is shared by you both.

Teamwork is offering your very best self and your very best gifts to another while they are offering the same to you.

The greatest example of the dance of loving kindness in my own life is the existence of Angela's Parables. Barbara and I created the parables together. Neither one of us could have managed to create them on our own. By blending and merging our best selves, we created something bigger than both of us. The parables are my thoughts and ideas written with Barbara's pen. I spoke in my native tongue: the language of the heart. My friend offered me her silence, her time, and took care to make an accurate translation.

The parables came out randomly and scrambled. Barbara put all of the parables in good, clean order and fixed all the grammar problems and misspelled words. I offered my friend my loyalty, my affection, and my words.

(Right)
Two-year-old Rocky is dressed for New Year's.



(Below)
Davy is an 11-year-old Rottweiler.



She offered me her time, her patience, her silence, and her Strunk and White.

We all know how it is possible for a solitary soul to make something from nothing. But there is a lot to be said for making something

out of nothing in a team. All the while we were creating our something, Barbara and I had each other, so we were never lonely. When we were finished, we still had each other, but we had parables too! We both won by doing it together.

Teamwork is not only about offering your best to another, but doing so gleefully and graciously. Nobody wants to sit on the lap of a grumbling sourpuss. When you are a team

player, you put out all of your biscuits and all of the little dishes of water so that everyone may share and enjoy everything. Teamwork is not about leftovers and who gets the doggie bag.

When you meet your teammate on the street, raise your head up or crouch low so that in your greeting you are both on the same level. Plant a kiss on your teammate's nose and place one paw on their arm. However you choose to do it, acknowledge the input and importance of the other's contribution to your joint effort. However you choose to honor your partner, when you do, you are letting your partner know that something bigger than either one of you now exists in the world because of you both. Let your teammate know that you realize you could not have danced the dance of loving kindness without having held the other in your arms.

Faithfully,
Angela



(Above) Punky's owner writes: "... I do believe [an animal's] spirit can be with us .. I still feel Punky's ... so sweet." The cat died June 10, 2006.

(Right) Theunis the Black is an 8 years old Friesian horse from the Netherlands. His owner states: "He is gentle and a joy to all who know him."

Please Remember...

the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi
with your tax-deductible contribution.
Bequests and other planned gifts
are greatly appreciated.

Pewter Pet Medallion

Here's a beautiful reminder that St. Francis loves and protects pets, and is with them wherever they go. Our St. Francis pet medallion features a lovely image of St. Francis and animals, with the words:

St. Francis of Assisi, Protector of Animals.

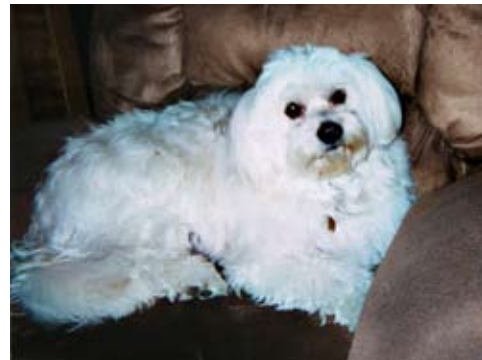
Cast in classic pewter, we will even engrave it on the back with the name of a pet free of charge.

This medallion makes a charming gift for a fellow pet owner, or for your own pet. Please accept it with our compliments for your donation of \$25 or more.

Thank you for your generosity.



Please be aware that delivery of the medallion may take 6-8 weeks

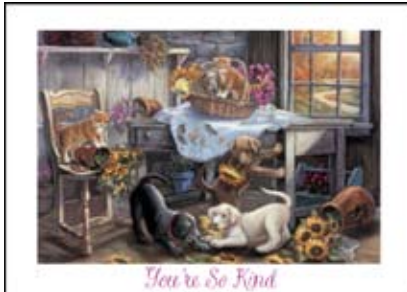


Four-year-old Toby Benton relaxes in a favorite chair.

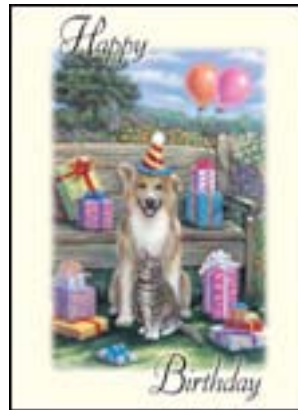


NEW All Occasion Cards Available

NOTE: These cards will be mailed to our previous donors in early March.



Y078681
You're so kind
 Thank you so much
 for looking after
 my pet.



Y072239
Happy Birthday
 Best Wishes for a
 wonderful day!



Y071014
Birthday Greetings
 With warmest thoughts and best
 wishes for happiness on your
 birthday and always.



Y070359
Thinking of You
 (Blank inside)

Y079056
 May beautiful memories
 bring you strength
 at this difficult time



All the cards are in full color.

To request cards,
 call 414-744-1160 ext. 3033
 or e-mail
sguinta@lakeosfs.org

Your donations
 are appreciated!

Annual Pet Blessing at Cardinal Stritch University on October 7, 2007. (Stritch is a ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi)



PHOTO GALLERY

We appreciate receiving
 photos of
 the animal friends
 of our benefactors
 and try to use
 as many as possible
 throughout this publication.

Thank you for your
 contributions.

Troubadour is a publication of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis, Wisconsin.
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