

Dear Friend,

All of us can reflect back and recall people who have had a profound impact on our lives. In talking with Sister Mary Hau, it became evident that her love and respect for creation was instilled in her from a young age by her parents.

Growing up on a 100-acre dairy farm in Marytown, Wis., she was surrounded by rolling hills, plants, and animals of all kinds. Her parents, Marjorie and Albert Hau, taught their children a love for the land. They learned that each farm animal was to be treated with the utmost respect and care.

For many people when they hear the word pet, they think of a cat or dog. But for those who grow up on a farm, in addition to having dogs and cats for pets, other farm animals also have the honor of being a pet.

This was true for Gail, the cow. Sister Mary and Gail were buddies. She remembers the day Gail gave birth to a calf at the furthest end of the pasture. Getting in the farm truck with her older brother, Bill, they ventured out to pick up the precious calf. Gail followed behind them back to the barn. The calf was named Lizzie.

As Lizzie grew, Sister Mary's younger brother, John, decided Lizzie would be his 4-H project. But he had problems getting Lizzie to follow his lead. So, Sister Mary decided to help him. With rope in hand, she led Lizzie around the barnyard much to the amazement of her brother.

Just like her mother, Lizzie had a special place in Sister Mary's heart. This did not sit well with Skipper, the farm dog. After all, he was supposed to be the center of attention. It was not uncommon for him to nip at Lizzie's ankles when Sister Mary was leading her around.

She related how whenever an animal was sick, she was there to care and nurse it back to health. One of the calves was born with a water head. Her father wanted to kill it, but Sister Mary convinced him that she wanted to care for it until it died. Maybe this loving, compassionate care for the animals on the farm were the roots of her dedication to nursing for over 50 years.



Sister Mary Hau as a young girl.



Sister Mary's brother John, and Lizzie the cow.



Skipper, the jealous farm pooch.



Always tending to the garden.



Using perennials for bouquets.



Pesky, but cute, little Daisy.



Watering the plants in the convent.

Even at a young age, Sister Mary was already following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi in her compassion for animals. Thomas of Celano, in his biography of St. Francis, recounts how Francis and one of the brothers came upon a man who had two bound lambs on his shoulders and was on his way to the market. Francis was moved with compassion, knowing that the lambs would be sold and killed for meat. He immediately took off his cloak, giving it to the man in exchange for the lambs.

Sister Mary spoke of how she had always been fascinated by growing things. It was in helping her dad in the fields and her mother in the garden that she learned about tending the soil and nurturing growing plants.

This love of plants led her to caring for houseplants and gardening in the various places she has lived and worked. One of the Sisters commented how Sister Mary cared for 28 houseplants when she lived with her. Like her mother, she would plant perennials that were used to create beautiful bouquets of flowers.

Now in her retirement at St. Francis Convent, Sister Mary continues to be an example for others of respecting God's creation. Every week the plants in the common areas of the convent are watered and given special TLC by Sister Mary.

She loves giving special attention to the pets that come to St. Francis Convent to visit the Sisters. One day Daisy, a chihuahua, came to visit during bingo. Daisy was being rather pesky. The Sisters were finding it hard to concentrate on bingo. So, Sister Mary came to the rescue. Using her charm with animals, Daisy fell asleep on her lap.

Like Sister Mary, care for God's creation has always had a special place in the hearts of our Sisters. Through their various ministries, they brought the goodness of God to those they served. Today our Sisters continue to respond with compassion to the needs of others. If you are able to make a gift to help supplement the needs of these Sisters, this would mean so much to us.

I want to thank you in advance for your generosity. We will hold you and your intentions in our prayers. May God bless you abundantly!

Gratefully,

Sister Mary Kemen, OSF

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