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12 Our special friends

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THE CIVIC CIRCLE

Almost all households have pets in different forms; our home always had dogs. My friend Letty has her beloved cat who sleeps in her bed. Another friend Lilia, has parrots as pets. My godchild Genivere has her horse, a pond full of bright colored fishes and a turtle I gave her years ago. My friend Alice lets her dog sleep in her bed after a nightly foot bath! My late uncle had a bird who talked and whistled at us.

I cannot remember a time in our home when we did not have dogs. I remembered Juggie and Archie (after the comic characters), Wowie, Brownie, Pochie and now we have Fluffy, Maxie, Barbie and Bonnie. The fun part of having pets was finding names for

them. As children we used to fight over what names to give. We had cats, turtles, fish and birds but everyone's favorites were the dogs. They are fiercely loyal and my father used to say they were our unpaid but very loyal security guards. He would personally prepare their favorite food. When my nephews and nieces were small, our dogs allow the kids to play with them and tolerated their mischief.

It is good that a day is set aside for all animal life. October 4 is celebrated worldwide as World Animal Day. This date is also the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, a nature lover and the Patron Saint of animals. He is portrayed in icons with various animals.

World Animal Day was first organized in 1931 in Florence, Italy to highlight the plight of endangered species and in 2003, organizations launched the official World Animal Day. This day is for everyone in the world who cares about animals. It is also to encourage people to show their affection and care for all animal life. Blessing of animals on this day is done in many churches throughout the world and this day is celebrated by animal lovers of all beliefs and nationalities.

Unfortunately, many times we see animals mistreated by humans; some animals bear terrible scars from man's cruelty; there are abandoned pets starving and roaming around our city. I remembered Tatay (Perla's father) who had cats. He used to say he will give away the kittens only to people who will truly care and feed them.

Here in our city, I did not notice any big celebration for this special day, but it is good to celebrate this day to show our affection to all the animals we have at home and respect for all animal life. I cringe when I see goats and pigs tied and hanging at the back of jeepneys or buses, chickens hanging upside down from some motorcab or jeepney. How they must have suffered but they cannot express their pain to us.

May we learn to respect all forms of animal lives; in many ways, these animals bring joy and security into our lives. They can sense our emotions and are often a source of joy and comfort. Let us teach the young to love the pets in our homes and respect all forms of animal life outside our home.

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