

Lessons from a Cat

By Michelle Nanouche, C.S.B.

Our Momma cat was just a teenager when she had her kittens. We kept one and found happy homes for the rest. While Momma enjoyed the freedom to come and go as she pleased, Baby stayed indoors – that is until she made a game-changing thirty second running tour of the house – glancing off walls, toppling lamps and shredding draperies. In my mind's eye, I can still see the look on Momma when Baby went outside. It read as, "Are you kidding me? Who is going to take care of her now?"

Baby's world expanded to include a concrete slab in our back yard, which would serve as base camp for the rigorous training that would follow for the next week. Little by little, Momma let Baby off the slab to chase a butterfly, sniff a bush, and explore the limits of the yard. And over the course of days, the lessons broadened to include the side yard and front garden. But in between each new progressive step, if she presumed to go too fast or wander too far, Momma was on her like a cottontail on a rabbit, chasing her back to the slab.

Eventually, Baby was given full freedom to go and do whatever she liked. But the discipline of constantly returning to the slab continued to serve her well. Every morning, she started her day with a little slab time. I would often catch her napping there in the afternoon.

To me, prayer, meditation and spiritual study can serve as a supportive "slab" that anyone can resort to for rest, direction and guidance. Psalm 71 reads, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress... thou art my trust from my youth." (Psalm 71:1-5)

I have found that establishing oneself on the rock of understanding God and His relation to His creation first thing in the day provides steadiness and directions for taking new and progressive steps. A frequent return to that morning inspiration throughout the day can rescue us from any challenges, doubts and fears that may arise. Consecrated "slab" time keeps us safe and propels us with confidence as we venture out in the world.

Here are a few lessons I learned from our Momma cat: Everything you do can start from the slab. When in doubt, go back to the slab. Pushing boundaries? Check in with the slab. If you need a rest, curl up on the slab.

In the words of nineteenth century author and discoverer of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, "He who dwelleth in eternal light is bigger than the shadow, and will guard and guide His own." (Eddy, Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896, p 134)

Have you given yourself a little "slab-time" today?