



Living in Wonder

An Equine Bodyworker in Awe of God's Creation

By Kaycee Monnens

"All things of creation are children of the Father and thus brothers of man. God wants us to help animals if they need help."

—St. Francis of Assisi

In all people, there is a certain, innate fascination with the horse. Children reach for their soft noses and adults know the nobility of a fine man sitting atop a fine horse. Biased as I am, I have always felt that God made the horse with something special. If we wonder at the creation, how much more wondrous the Creator must be.

I am able to wonder every day because of my career as an equine bodyworker.

Horses, like humans, need bodywork when muscles get tight

and sore. Since their work is often physical, I am called to return their bodies to proper working order. To do this, I locate the areas of pain and use trigger points and gentle stretches to help the body realign itself.

People often ask, "How are you able to do that to a horse?" It is true, a horse outweighs me by 1,000 pounds. However, the vast majority are gentle and willing. Still, it takes a certain mannerism to perform bodywork on horses: a mixture of gentleness, firmness, and kindness.

My clients include professional rodeo athletes and cowboys, who rely on their equine partners for their livelihoods. As someone who competes in rodeos and helps on my family's cattle ranch, I know the precious bond created between man and horse, for which there are no words. In "The Problem of Pain," C.S. Lewis reasons that because God gave man dominion over all beasts, animals were made for us. Therefore, the most natural of all animals are our pets. Animals may not have our humanity and souls in the



Opposite: Kaycee Monnens is an equine bodyworker who brings her Catholic faith to her work. Each unique horse reveals God's goodness to her. **Above:** Monnens and her fiancé, Tobias Cortner, are pictured checking pasture in the Clarks Fork Canyon in northwestern Wyoming. The two are passionate about traditional values of Christianity and cowboys. **Below:** Monnens pictured with Father Bryce Lungren, the "cowboy priest" of northeast Wyoming.

same sense, but they partake in God's goodness in a very real way. What a mystery to behold in my everyday life!

It is impossible to work so closely with an animal and not see God's intricate design. From the physics of their movement to the complexity of muscle systems, it is clear that their existence is not random or accidental. Every animal's creation, like the creation of man, consists of order, thought, and beauty.

Not long ago, I had many doubts bubbling up about my work. "Am I doing enough?" I would pray. It did not escape me that my time could perhaps be used in closer service to the church or in ministry. I asked the Lord to show me a new path if that's what he desired, but he never budged. "You're right where I want you," he seemed to say. My morning

offering became central to my life. As long as I was offering everything to him (my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings), then I was giving everything I had to use as he willed. Finding a Mass to attend while traveling has also been a special way to experience our Lord and his bride no matter the



location. The Catholic Church is my "home away from home."

Working on each horse takes about half an hour apiece, which means the inevitable topics of morality, family, and virtue crops up. It is here that I am able to evangelize, even in the smallest ways. St. Ann has been a special intercessor for me. Ann is my middle name, confirmation saint, and the patron saint of equestrians. Together, we ask for God's healing for each horse I touch. We also pray for the souls of every person I come into contact with, whether it be a client, a stranger, or the cashier at the gas station.

Spending time with horses every day, I can say with certainty that my fascination for them never fades, and therefore, my wonderment at our Father never fades, either.