

PAWS for Action – Letting go
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If you love animals the way I do you will be familiar with the subject matter of this column. I've had animals my whole life and have been lucky to see them grow into old age. Unfortunately, the down side is when I have to make end of life decisions on behalf of my beloved pets.

I've cared for both human and animal family members over the years. I should be an old hand at this but it still catches me up short. I have faith in God and that His plan is much bigger and better than I can ever imagine. I have the knowledge that I have done what I can for my loved ones and I have no regrets. But it is never easy to let go and I don't suppose it should be.

In December, I wrote about a special needs dog named Sully. He was a stray picked up by our local animal control shelter. We noticed shortly after that he had little stamina and collapsed after a short walk. Whatever was going on with him seemed serious but we hoped it would be something we could treat. I've been fostering Sully since October.

After various blood tests and muscle and nerve biopsies, Sully was diagnosed with degenerative polyneuropathy. This is a generic label that describes a condition that affects mobility and can be linked to any number of causes. Depending on the specific cause it could be treatable or could be something that eventually resolves itself.

In Sully's case, his condition is not curable and can only be managed with anti-inflammatory and pain medication. This has been getting him by for a time but it looks like we may be near the end of the road and I will soon have to make that most difficult of decisions.

Much has been written about how to know when it's time. I have nothing new to add but it never hurts to review the various articles that are out there hoping it will help me make the right decision at the right time.

I would love to have a sense of moral certainty about the decision. A voice from the heavens would be welcome. I will likely have to make due with far less than this and will simply have to make the best decision I can with the information I have at the time.

I will look for signs like chronic pain that can no longer be controlled with medication. Sully, is becoming more fussy about food the past week or so. He cannot always stand up without help. When the time comes I will be there with Sully, laying my hands on him and praying for his peaceful entry into Heaven.

The word "euthanasia" is Greek, and literally it means "good death". Our gift to the animals we have loved is to end their pain and suffering at the appropriate time by giving them a swift and merciful death.

My life is good and overwhelmingly happy. My faith informs me that something even better is to follow. I know this is not the last I will see of my beloved Sully. Easter gives me cause for celebration of what is in store for my loved ones, human and animal, and also for me. It is the greatest of all our Christian Holidays and is coming at just the right time for me this year.

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