

Gifts of Grace Ministry Newsletter

January / February, 2015



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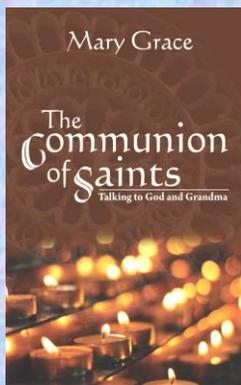
A new year has arrived, along with endless possibilities and opportunities for spiritual growth. Let this be a fresh beginning, an occasion to let go of past grievances, and a chance to embrace hope for a year full of blessings.

One of my many blessings is the good fortune to live in the country on a 6,600 acre state forest in the Finger Lakes of New York. The seasonal changes are a dramatic display of nature in full glory. Winter can be one of the most spectacular examples. On this frigid, sunny day, I gaze out my window to a breathtaking snow covered vista. The beautiful, blue sky, the sparkling white landscape, and the minus 15 degree temperature, is a reminder of our magnificent creator, and who's really in control.

Winter also brings flocks of feathered friends to the feeders on my deck and provides a different perspective on my bird watching hobby. I spend each morning in meditation and prayer sitting at my kitchen table with a candle burning and my cup of tea. I gaze out the sliding glass doors and spend much time observing how the myriad species interact when vying for a spot on the railing to snatch a snack.

The chickadees are the first to arrive as they are not afraid to approach the feeder while I'm still in the process of putting the seed out. The next to swoop down are the bold bluejays; they always go straight for the peanuts. Some birds come as loners or pairs, such as cardinals, woodpeckers, nuthatches, and wrens. Others come in large families, such as goldfinches, sparrows, juncos, and mourning doves. Often a squirrel arrives and scares a few of the birds away, while some just move over to make room.

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There is much diversity among the group, and it amazes me how well they all get along and take turns at the feeder. Whole families patiently wait in the nearby trees and watch as other flocks peck away at the limited amount of food. Of course there are often a few squabbles among the frenzy of activity, but I noticed that most of the fighting occurs within birds of the same species, and not between the divergent factions. I suppose that this is how they establish the pecking order in their individual communities.

Feeding the birds each day gives me the opportunity to practice the teachings of Christ by welcoming everyone to the table for breakfast. There is no discrimination in nature at the universal birdfeeder of life. Furthermore, the birds and squirrels all seem to understand there is enough for everyone to eat, as long as they share. This reminds me of another lesson from Jesus, “Do not worry about your life. Look at the birds in the air, they do not sew or reap or store away in barns, and yet, your heavenly Father feeds them” (Math 6:25-26). I often wonder if feeding the birds and squirrels each day is part of my purpose in God’s greater plan and how he provides for his creatures in my small corner of the world?

In the same way, God provides for us by sending earth angels and giving signs that we are on the right path. This happens when a stranger or someone in your life shows up at just the right moment and tells you something that you needed to hear at that precise time in your life, when it’s needed most. It may be a kind word, a helping hand, a Good Samaritan, a complimentary e-mail, or an uplifting story that made you smile.

God’s messengers may come in many forms, whether another person, a colorful bird, a cute little squirrel, or your faithful pet. Do not worry, embrace the winter, play in the snow, and take time to enjoy nature. You will get through another year, and your current troubles will eventually pass. Count your blessings, keep the faith, and have hope for a fruitful 2015. May the Saints be with you throughout the upcoming year.



Love, Mary Grace

Events

I recently had the opportunity to participate in my first “Parafest,” which was held at the Avon Inn, south of Rochester, NY. This was a gathering of paranormal professionals and enthusiasts to provide the public with unusual services, workshops and events. It included paranormal investigators, UFO-ologists, a horror movie actor, mediums, and even zombie walkers.

I especially enjoyed talking with another author, Chris DiCesare, who wrote about his haunting experience as a college student at the State University of New York in Geneseo. The event is known as the C2D1 case, which referred to his dorm room number in Erie Hall. It turns out that Chris and I were one year apart at the local college (1980’s), shared the same professors, and had many common acquaintances. I am currently reading his book, *Surviving Evidence, Memoir of an Extreme Haunting*, which is very scary. Also, YouTube videos can be found on the internet under “C2D1 hauntings.”

I had a blast at the Parafest and thank Ted VonSon and the *Genesee Valley Paranormal Investigators* for organizing the event. I enjoyed meeting such interesting people and look forward to more unique opportunities this year.

Presentations & Workshops

I am available to do speaking presentations and workshops for retreats, conferences, church events, organizations or spiritual groups on the following subjects:

After-Death Communication
The Science of Parapsychology
Religion and the Paranormal
Spiritualism and Mysticism
The Communion of Saints
Near-Death Experience
Catholicism and the Supernatural
Guided Meditations to connect with loved ones in spirit

Prices are negotiable, depending on group size and travel expenses.

Gifts of Grace Ministry is a non-profit program.

For more info go to: www.giftsofgraceministry.org

If interested in hosting a workshop or presentation, call me, Mary Grace @ 585-766-9318 or E-Mail: mgrace-888@outlook.com

Paranormal Events Associated with St. Mary

Marian Apparitions



The spirit of St. Mary has appeared to thousands of people throughout history. The term used for these events are “Marian Apparitions.” The sites where the specters occurred have become holy places and pilgrimages for millions of devotees. Some of the best-known locations are Lourdes in France, Fatima in Portugal, Medjugorje in Yugoslavia, and Guadalupe in Mexico (I witnessed this apparition, at left, during a church mission). Many healings have occurred in these sacred places.

Over the centuries, numerous canonized saints have documented their visions of the Virgin Mary. The Blessed Mother continues to appear to people today and countless have seen her in a clairvoyant vision, meditation or dream. She often appears to mediums during a psychic reading as a symbol of the Catholic faith and to bring a message to the sitter. I would love to hear your story if you have had such a divine encounter.

Weeping Statues

There are fascinating cases of paranormal phenomenon involving weeping statues of St. Mary. A liquid is excreted from the eyes that have been found to be actual human tears, sweat or blood. The effect gives the appearance of the Blessed Mother crying. One took place in Akita, Japan in 1973 and was witnessed by millions over the course of six years.



Miraculous Medal



Mary appeared to St. Catherine Laboure’ in France and commissioned her to create a medal of the Immaculate Conception. In 1832 the medal was made depicting Mary on the front with the inscription, “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse for thee.” Many miracles have been attributed to people who wore the sacred object.

I was wearing the Miraculous Medal when I had my near-death experience. Within one month I was completely healed of two incurable illnesses: lupus and epilepsy. In addition, I was cured of alcohol and drug addiction. It was a true miracle, which is described in detail in my book, *The Communion of Saints*.

Featured Saint: Saint Mary, Blessed Mother of Jesus
Feast Day: January 1 **Patron Saint of Mothers**



Hail Mary, full of grace, our Lord is with thee and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

Catholics the world over are familiar with this prayer, which is devoted to Saint Mary. Also known as the Blessed Mother, The Virgin, Holy Mother, Queen of Saints and the Mother of Jesus, she is the most revered saint in Catholicism.

Little is known about Mary's life in general. She lived in Nazareth with her father, Joachim and mother, Ann. She had a sister-in-law, named Mary also, who was the wife of Joseph's brother, Cleopas. No brothers or sisters are ever mentioned in Scriptures. However, one well-known family member is Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist.

It is believed that Mary was betrothed to Joseph between the age of twelve and fourteen. Joseph was somewhere between sixty and eighty years old at the time. He was a widow who had four sons and two daughters from his first wife.

Most people are familiar with the story of Mary's miraculous conception. While she was still living at home as Joseph's fiancée, the angel Gabriel announced that she was to be the mother of the promised Messiah. Mary would conceive a child through the Holy Spirit. The baby was to be named "Jesus" and would be the Son of God. Mary willingly and humbly accepted her divine role. Another angel explained the situation to Joseph in a dream so he would accept Mary as his wife, despite all outward appearances. With God, all things are possible.

During Mary's pregnancy, Roman Emperor Augustus made a decree that required Joseph to return to his hometown of Bethlehem for a census. The couple traveled the eighty miles only to find there was no place to stay. They were guided to a stable where the holy birth took place and the prophecy was fulfilled. This became known as Christmas Day, which is celebrated on December 25. The event marks the beginning of the Christian story.

Like Jesus, not much is known about the early life of Mary. She is only mentioned several times in the Bible after giving birth. The first time is when she took Jesus to the temple to be circumcised, according to the Jewish tradition.

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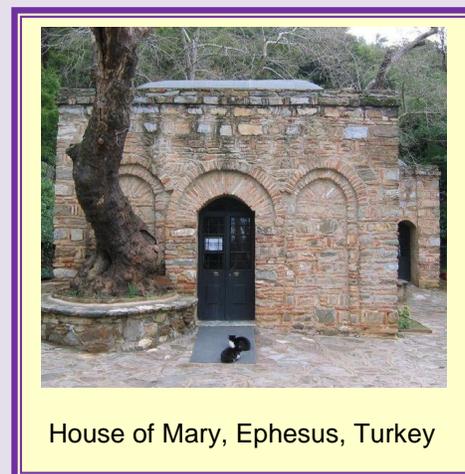
Mary is also cited in a story about Jesus when he was the age of twelve. The boy became separated from his parents while in Jerusalem; they eventually found him in the temple. In addition, Mary attended the infamous wedding where Jesus performed the miracle of turning water into wine. The saddest story involving the Blessed Mother was her presence at the feet of Jesus during his crucifixion. This is when Christ instructed his apostle, John to take care of her.

It is believed that Mary spent the rest of her life with St. John in what is now known as Ephesus, Turkey. There is a small stone structure there that is claimed to be the “House of the Virgin Mary.” Mary’s death is not recorded in scriptures. However, there is a medieval story that tells when the apostles opened her tomb it was empty. In place of her body was a room full of flowers. In 1950 the Church ruled that Mary never died, because she was free from sin. Instead, she was “assumed,” or taken up into heaven, body and soul. This became known as *The Immaculate Assumption*, which is celebrated on August 15 and is also considered one of St. Mary’s Feast Days.

In 1854 the Catholic Church proclaimed that Mary was conceived and born unsoiled by original sin. This became known as *The Immaculate Conception*, a holy day celebrated on December 2. This event is often confused with the “miraculous conception,” which refers to Mary’s virginity upon conceiving Jesus.

The entire month of May is devoted to the blessed Mother and is called “Mary’s Month.” Many Catholics remember building a “May Shrine” as a child. This altar consists of a statue of St. Mary standing inside an upright box that is adorned with paper flowers. Sometimes a crown of flowers is made to place on the statue’s head. Another version can be seen in many home gardens and is referred to as a “Bathtub Madonna.” An old bathtub, stood on end, and Buried partially in the ground, makes a perfect temple to Mary the Blessed Mother.

Consider making your own May Shrine this spring by creating a special place for the Blessed Mother in your home or garden. Pray to Saint Mary for whatever healing or guidance you may need.



House of Mary, Ephesus, Turkey

I include St. Mary in my morning meditation through the following prayer,
from a popular Catholic song:

**“Gentle woman, quiet light, morning star so strong and bright.
Gentle woman, peaceful dove, teach us wisdom, teach us love.”**