

Gifts of Grace Ministry Newsletter

July - August, 2015



Table of Contents

Page 1-2: Greeting:
Firefly Lessons

Page 3: Events

Page 4: Firefly Facts
& Spiritual Quote

Page 5- 6: Featured
Saint: Bonaventure

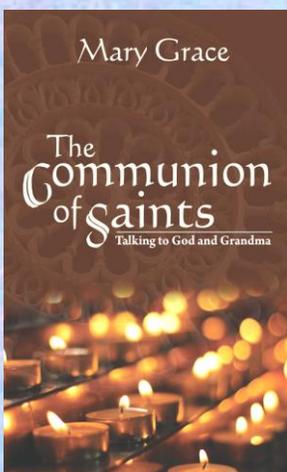
Greetings Friends & Saints:

As I write this, I am sitting by the campfire on a warm, starry night in my office in the woods. I can hear the frogs and peepers singing, along with an occasional high-pitch bark of a nearby fox. Lurking and on the prowl, somewhere in the nearby bushes, is my fearless cat, Mercy. The scent of citronella candles keeps the mosquitoes at bay as I throw an occasional log on the flickering fire. It's summer time and I have been enjoying many of the seasonal activities in nature that I always look forward to.

One of my favorite pastimes is watching the fireflies when they are out in full-force for mating season. On a few balmy nights each year, in the fields and trees, just beyond our barnyard, a million flashing lights sparkle as far as the eye can see. The woods is transformed into an endless line of Christmas trees, as if someone decorated the entire forest with strings of yellow, pulsating mini-lights, which twinkle at variable speeds. The field becomes a mirror-ball dance floor and the disco-like showcase is a magical display of nature in all its awesome glory.

Despite the frenzy of activity, the scene is a tranquil, soundless, love fest; a spectacularly, silent symphony that brings a profound sense of peace and awe. I never cease to be amazed at the magnificent sight and the sense that everything is in divine, perfect order.

(Continued on page 2)



Although it's almost incomprehensible, just how one firefly attracts a particular mate, I notice that "doubt" never occurs in nature. The firefly does not go out each evening and think to himself, "I wonder if anyone will notice me tonight?" He is just one tiny spark of light among the millions of other lightening bugs, yet he does not worry about his purpose or worthiness. He simply participates in the dance, does what comes naturally, and has faith.

In the same way, the trees don't doubt that they will achieve their greatness each day and flowers don't question whether they will bloom. The birds don't doubt they will find food and the deer trust they will have shelter from the storms. If only we could learn from nature and eliminate doubt from our life.

Just looking up at the infinite starry night can make one feel irrelevant and full of doubt about their significance in life. At the same time, it can make you feel like you are a vital part of something much bigger, something so magnificent that you can only imagine how your life ties into the same vast work of art that includes the trees, the birds, the deer and the fireflies.

God provides the canvas for the watercolors of nature to paint upon; all of creation contributes. We can never see the final picture, for it will never be finished. We can, however, envision how our small part will make it more beautiful. We can know that each of God's unique beings is somehow creating a masterpiece that only He can see. Like nature itself, there is no question that it will be in divine perfect order.

And at the end of the evening, each lightening bug will go home with the satisfaction that his tiny light mattered and was just as bright as the others. More importantly, he participated in illuminating the painting of life by adding his small, but significant glow. Like the firefly, we have a purpose and we are worthy; there is no doubt.

Have a super summer!
Love, Mary Grace



Upcoming Events with Mary Grace

Special Event: Open to the public for only the second time in history (since 2010 in Lily Dale). This workshop combines elements of the Catholic Mass with a Spiritualist Circle. Designed for Small Christian Communities and private spiritual groups:

The Communion of Saints ***Where Spiritualism Meets Catholicism***

The Purple Door
Saturday, July 25 / 1:00 - 4:00pm
3259 South Winton Road, Rochester, NY 14623

If we can talk to God and the saints in heaven, why can't we talk to grandma in heaven? Learn how Catholics *can* talk to the dead through "The Communion of Saints," a little understood Church doctrine, which is a widely practiced form of spiritualism, as well as an integral part of the faith. Students will participate in a ceremony to connect with a loved one in spirit and find out more about:

- Our love affair with the saints
- Parapsychology 101, the science of Spiritualism
- How science supports Catholic beliefs
- Spiritualism in Catholicism: from promotion to demotion
- A Mass-like ceremony that includes Catholic songs, prayers, and rituals
- Saint Circle: A guided meditation to reunite with a deceased loved one

Cost: \$20.00 to The Purple Door

Please RSVP Connie @ 585-427-8110 or
Register: www.purpledoorsoulssource.com

Book Signing: Andover Parafest
Andover Haunted House
Saturday, August 8 / 11:00am – 6:00pm
5 West Greenwood Street, Andover, NY
For more info go to: www.hauntedandover.com

Book Signing: Lily Dale Bookstore
2 Melrose Park, Lily Dale, NY
Saturday, August 15 / 10:00am - Noon
Sunday, August 16 / 2:00pm – 5:00pm

Spiritual Quote

“Just as you see that a ray of light entering through a stained glass window is colored in different ways, according to the different colors of the various parts, so the divine rays shine forth in every creature in different ways and in different properties.”

St. Bonaventure

Firefly Facts

Fireflies, also known as lightning bugs, are neither flies nor bugs. They are actually beetles.

Male fireflies attract females by flashing a species-specific pattern. The females flash in response and may flirt with as many as ten males at once. Eventually only one is chosen to mate with.

All the lightning bugs you see in the trees, and flying in open fields, are male. The females remain perched on stalks of vegetation on the ground.

There are over 2,000 species of fireflies that emit a variety of colors, including yellow, red, and blue-green. Some species do not glow at all; this is the case for many lightning bugs in the Western, United States.

In the “Photuris” species, the female mimics the flashing pattern of males from other varieties. When the male responds by joining her, she eats him! These cannibalistic fireflies can also stage aerial assaults by snatching their prey in mid-flight. Dating can be fatal!

Fireflies are bioluminescent throughout their life cycle. They spend two years underground as larvae. When they emerge, they are known as “glowworms.” The glow deters predators from eating them, as they are mildly toxic.

Fireflies devote the final two weeks of their lives flashing, mating and laying eggs. They do not eat during these last few weeks of their adulthood.

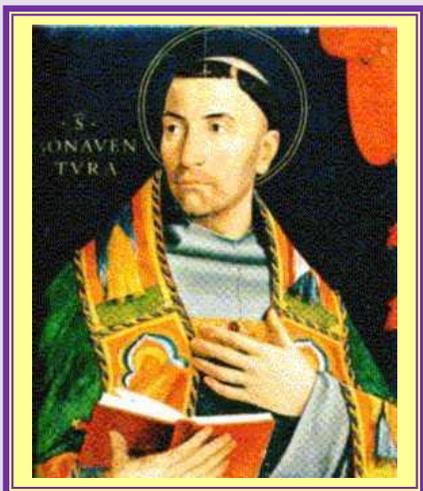
To host a workshop or presentation for your spiritual group, retreat, or organization, go to Mary Grace’s website for more information:

www.giftsofgraceministry.org

Featured Saint: Saint Bonaventure (1412-1431)

Feast Day: July 15

Patron Saint of Intestinal Disorders



I am a proud member of a “Bonnies Family.” This means that we have strong ties to St. Bonaventure University in Allegany, NY. It’s where my father, two brothers, a sister, a niece, and a nephew attended school. It’s where I did most of the research for my book. After receiving his Ph.D. from Kent State, my brother, Terry returned to Bonaventure to teach as a business professor. He loved sharing the same sacred ground where Thomas Merton once taught as well.

Many people in the Western New York area are familiar with the rural, Catholic College. It was named after St. Bonaventure, one of the greatest leaders of the Order of Friars Minor, more commonly known as “Franciscans.” The order was named after its founder, St. Francis of Assisi, who had a profound influence on the destiny of Bonaventure.

Bonaventure was an Italian medieval scholastic theologian and philosopher. He was born Giovanni de Fidanza in Tuscany, Italy in 1221. When he was a child he was extremely sick with a life threatening intestinal disorder. His mother prayed to St. Francis for his recovery. When he was miraculously healed, she exclaimed “O buona ventura,” which means “O good fortune”; from then on he was called “Bonaventure.” Not much more is known about his childhood, but St. Francis saved his life and remained an important part it.

At the age of twenty six Bonaventure entered the Franciscan order. He taught for several years at the University of Paris and in 1257 he got his doctorate in theology, along with his Dominican counterpart, St. Thomas Aquinas.

In the same year, Bonaventure was elected Minister General of an increasingly divided Franciscan Order. On the one hand, were the “spirituals” who insisted on a strict adherence to Francis’s spirit of poverty and disciplined religious community. On the other hand, were those who wanted the more relaxed rules of property ownership and institutional life.

(Continued on page six)

Bonaventure was able to establish a middle ground in the order, with a theology that integrated faith and reason. He used Christ as an example of the “one true master” who demonstrated knowledge that begins with faith, is developed through a rational understanding, and perfected by mystical union with God. With Bonaventure’s philosophy and direction, the order became so successful that he was called the second founder of the Franciscans. The man, whose life was saved by St. Francis, returned the favor by saving the life of the Franciscan order.

St. Bonaventure went on to write a number of important works. Some of his most famous was *The Mind’s Road to God* and *Reduction of the Arts to Theology*. His most influential was *The Journey of the Mind of God*, written during a retreat at Mt. La Verna, Italy in 1259. It was during this time that Bonaventure received the sacred wounds of Christ known as “stigmata.” Perhaps it was due to his strong connection to St. Francis of Assisi, because at this same site, St. Francis experienced stigmata just thirty years earlier.

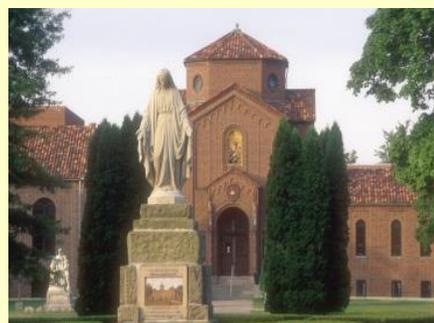
A shrine was built at the sanctuary in La Verna called the “Chapel of St. Bonaventure.” A few years later the Chapel of Stigmata was built in The Chiesa Maffiore Church near the location where the miracles took place. In 1273 Pope Gregory the X made Bonaventure cardinal-bishop of Albano.

In the following year, on July 15, Bonaventure died suddenly and in suspicious circumstances. Some historians suggested he was poisoned, while others claim he died of natural causes. His original feast day was set on July 14 because the 15th was already taken by St. Henry. In 1969 the feast day was restored to his actual date of death.

Bonaventure was canonized in 1482 and made a Doctor of the Church in 1588. In recognition of his angelic virtue he is known as the “Seraphic Doctor.”

The only existing relic of the saint is the arm and hand with which he wrote his *Commentary on the Sentences*. It is now preserved in St. Nicholas Church in the Italian hill town of Civita di Bagnoregio.

Bonaventure was regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of the Middle Ages. His legacy lives on at St. Bonaventure University. Go Bonnies!



St. Bonaventure University