

Gifts of Grace Ministry Newsletter

July / August, 2014



Table of Contents

**Page 1-2: Greeting
Breakfast with
Bluebirds**

**Page 3: Events &
Quotes**

**Page 4: Reader
Response**

**Page 5: Featured
Saint**

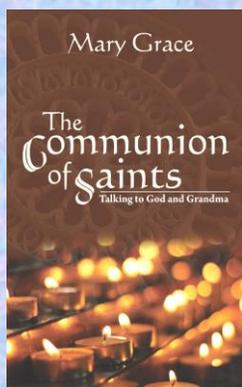
Greetings Friends & Saints:

Summer has finally arrived and I am truly in my element. One of my favorite pastimes is bird watching. Although this is year round entertainment for me, I get truly excited every spring about the annual appearance of “bluebirds.” Each year I pray that one of the nesting boxes in our barnyard will be host to another mating pair. I was delighted when it finally happened so I could start my annual ritual of “breakfast with the bluebirds.”

As an amateur nature photographer, I like to get close enough to the birds to get some great pictures. In order to do this, I built a perch several yards away from their house. It is made of tree branches, which are wired to a pole. A small basket hangs from one of the branches to serve as a feeder. About twenty yards away I have an observation area with a chair, small table and an old picnic bench for a footstool.

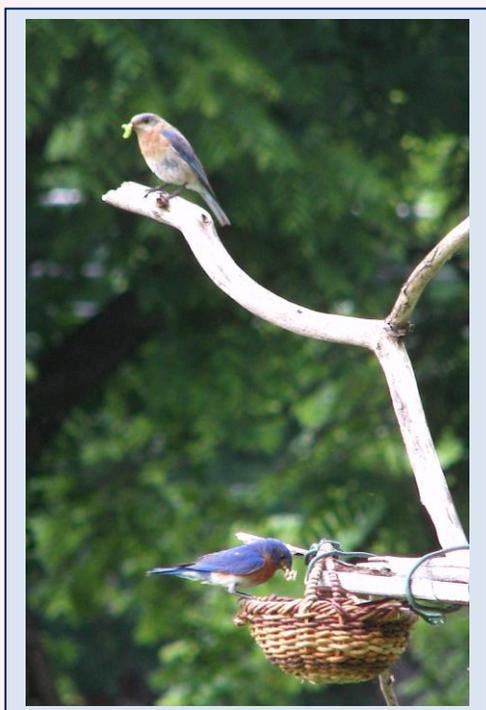
Each morning I put about ten worms in the basket and call out to the birds with a particular whistle. In this classic “Pavlovian” technique, the birds learn to associate my nearby presence, and unique call, with food. After leaving the snack, I then wait, watch and have my own meal of cereal and coffee. As the weeks go by, they get used to my company and eagerly check out their feeder whenever I arrive.

Breakfast with the bluebirds is an event I always look forward to. One reason is because it is also my time with God. The grass barnyard is the perfect, peaceful, picturesque setting to meditate, contemplate, pray, and enjoy the divine presence I find myself immersed in. Surrounded by a variety of trees, wild rose bushes, the chatter of squirrels, chipmunks, and myriad bird songs, I bask in the sun, take in the splendor of nature, and marvel at the perfect order of the world. And as my bond with the bluebirds grows, so does my connection with God.
(Continued on Page 2)



I am in awe at the dedication and simple purpose of life the bluebirds possess. They don't seem to be concerned with their reason for being on earth, and never seem worried about how to build their nest or feed their growing family. They simply do what they have to do, without complaint, and get the job done. It puts my own existence in perspective as I am privileged to witness the unfolding of life, not only the bluebirds', but mine as well.

I began bluebird watching with the goal of getting that perfect picture. Over the years, however, "just being" with God and my feathered friends became my priority. The journey is more important. If the season ends with a great picture, that's bonus. If not, that's OK too. After all, there is always next year and a new generation of birds to befriend. And at the end of every summer, I am reminded of a very important spiritual lesson: No matter what issues or concerns we are facing, all problems disappear while having breakfast with bluebirds, and God.



**Have a Splendid Summer!
Love, Mary Grace**



**Breakfast with Bluebirds
(I got the pictures; Bonus!)**

Bluebirds Facts

Bluebirds are often confused with the much larger, and more aggressive, blue jay. Bluebirds migrate for the winter and prefer to eat live food, such as caterpillar larvae, beetles, and grasshoppers, but also like berries, and currants. Blue jays will live in the north year round and are a common sight in feeders. They like sunflower seeds, nuts, bread, and most anything you put out for them.

By the 1950's bluebirds were endangered because of loss of habitat. Due to great conservation efforts, the species has greatly recovered. Bluebirds are still a rare sight in many areas, so consider yourself blessed whenever you do spot one.

Spiritual Quote

**Ask not the sparrow,
how the eagle soars.**

A Course in Miracles

(Cited on page 235 of *The Communion of Saints*)

Upcoming Event

**Book Signing
Lily Dale Bookstore
Wednesday, July 9 & Thursday, July 10
10:00am – 1:00pm
Lily Dale, NY**

**For more info on workshops or book talks go to:
www.giftsofgraceministry.org or call me @ 585-766-9318**

Reader Response

Thank You: Thanks to all who sent me stories about how St. Anthony touched their lives and helped in findings lost articles. Keep up the great work Tony! Thanks also to all of you who sent me wonderful feedback on the Mother's Day article. I truly appreciate hearing from you; your stories keep me going.

Greetings Friends & Saints: Following the last newsletter, my good friend, Kim Palma of Rochester, NY e-mailed me with a great question. She asked, "What does your *Greeting* mean; am I a saint, a friend, or both?"

Answer: Growing up Catholic, I thought "saint" only referred to the most holy, canonized people in heaven. In my research on the communion of saints, I was surprised to find that saints are all "believers" who live on earth, in purgatory or heaven. In its broadest interpretation, "saints" are anyone who believe in a higher power, Supreme Being, gods or God, no matter what their religious or spiritual practice, or what dimension they reside.

Early Christians were called "saints." This referred to all the *living* followers of Jesus. Over time the definition of saint changed many times and culminated with the canonization process. However, to this day, all those who believe in any kind of God, are members of the communion of saints. Therefore, you are all saints and I consider you all my friends.

The fascinating history of the communion of saints is covered in "Chapter 3, A Fellowship of Souls" in my book, *The Communion of Saints*.

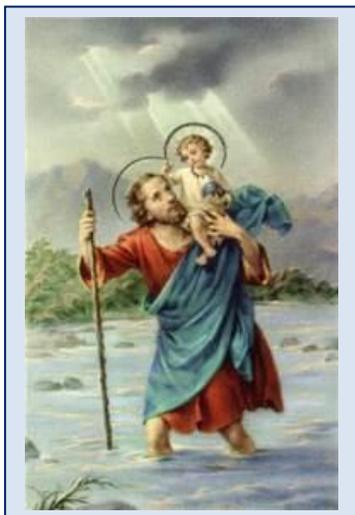
Insight

Initially the word "communion" meant "participation." The word "communication" comes from "communion." Therefore, communion with the saints implies "communication" with them. The act involves "participation" in an exchange of ideas, which we call "conversation."

Featured Saint: Saint Christopher

Feast Day: July 25

Patron Saint of Travelers



A medallion of St. Christopher is a common article found in countless cars. It may be firmly attached to a visor or dangling from the rearview mirror. Many prefer to wear the medal on a necklace or carry it in their pocket. Having this artifact brings peace of mind and comfort to millions of people around the world whenever they venture by vehicle, plane, bus, boat, or even by foot. St. Christopher provides protection during our earthly journeys and is the patron saint of “travelers.”

The life of St. Christopher seems to be based more on myth than fact. He was thought to be a Canaanite whose original name was “Reprodus” (some sources say it was “Offero”). He was an extremely tall man, measuring seven and a half feet, and was powerfully built. His date of birth is unknown, but he lived during the persecution of Christians.

Reprodus was the servant of a king until he became unsatisfied with the job; he wanted to serve the greatest king that lived. After a hermit told him about Jesus, the servant knew he had found a greater master and became a Christian.

Not sure of how he would serve God, the hermit suggested Reprodus ferry people across a dangerous river by carrying them. Due to his large size, he was perfect for the job. One day a boy asked to be taken across the river, so the giant man hoisted the child onto his shoulders and began the journey. The water was running very fast and deep that day. As he crossed, the river became higher and higher, while the child grew unusually heavy; it took all his strength to complete the treacherous task.

Upon reaching the opposite shore, the exhausted ferryman proclaimed that he felt he had carried the weight of the world on his shoulders. The boy replied, “You had on your shoulders not only the whole world, but Him who made it. I am Jesus Christ.” From then on, Reprodus was known as Christopher, which means carrier of the Christ.

Like many early Christians, St. Christopher was persecuted and eventually beheaded c 250 AD. He died a martyr and was one of the initial saints to be canonized. In this new age of fast and furious travel, this age-old saint continues to be one of the most popular.