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Hemlock Author Mary Grace holds her new book "The Communion of Saints: Talking to God and Grandma" outside of Sundance Books, 106 Main St., Geneseo where she will sign copies of the book between 11am and 3pm Saturday during the village's Summer Festival weekend.

Probing the Paranormal

Hemlock author probes religious-paranormal connections

Mary Grace sees no contradiction in 'Talking to God and Grandma'

by Howard W. Appell
Livingston County News

"The Communion of Saints: Talking to God and Grandma" is a book about communicating with one's loved ones who have died. Author Mary Grace, of Hemlock, attempts to reconcile paranormal experiences with devote religious belief.

The book is the product of ten years of research into authoritative sources -- individuals and documents -- in both fields. Cost is \$18.95. Mary will be signing copies at Sundance Books this Saturday during the Geneseo Festival, between 11:00 and 3:00.

"The Communion of Saints" is divided into three parts, related to one another by spiritual inspiration, Mary maintains. Part 1 describes personal experiences and how Mary came to write the book. Part 2 attempts to grasp the experiences through combined scientific/parapsychological and

religious/Christian/mystic approaches. The presentation is academic in format and meant to be a companion for classes Mary plans to teach. Part 3 is 'an instruction manual' for communicating with loved ones who have passed on.

Mary suggests her book may be helpful to anyone who has lost a loved one, but is particularly geared towards people of the Catholic faith who understand the doctrine of the Communion of Saints -- 'Saints' in the older sense being -- not the exclusively canonized individuals -- but any follower of the teachings of Christ, whether in Heaven, on earth or in purgatory. The doctrine postulates an eternal relationship among all saints.

The book examines not only the ability of communicating with those on the 'other side', but the importance of doing so, Mary said.

"This is where healing takes place -- for the living, and for those who have passed. It is the chance to have reconciliation when a person has died with an unresolved situation, or when the living person has guilt after the death of a loved one."

"Anyone can communicate with their loved ones on the other side. We all have that sixth sense, or psychic ability," Mary believes. "The ground-breaking message of the book is that this communication, the 'Communion of Saints,' is a God-given gift which can be better understood through the science of parapsychology."

Not an evil, author asserts

"Spirit communication is not some evil force of the devil, as some religions portray," Mary maintains.

Mary herself was a victim of such prejudice after two experiences changed her view of the world and her relation to a spiritual realm. Two months after the death of her mother, Mary encountered her in a consoling dream visitation. Then, one year later, Mary had a near-death experience stemming from health and substance issues.

"It opened up my psychic abilities. All of a sudden I had people communicating with me from other realms. People were wanting me to pass on messages to their loved ones here on earth. At first, I was very resistant. I felt I was going crazy," Mary relates.

Seeking guidance from her priest at a church she had attended for 40 years, Mary was astonished to be rebuffed and rejected -- to the extent of being asked to leave the church.

"He told me I was dabbling with evil spirits; that what I was doing was wrong and against the faith -- and that I needed to find another church," Mary related. "I was, in effect, excommunicated. I was told not to come there again. There were actually police involved."

Yet Mary claims to have uncovered a "huge contradiction" in Christian teaching: How can the belief in the Communion of Saints, an eternal relationship with departed family and friends, be accompanied by the directive, 'We don't want you talking to them'?

My book is not a book of heresy. It's a book of companionship and inspiration.

Researching old church documents at the Abby of the Genesee and St. Bonaventure University, Mary has discovered that the Catholic Church -- at least up until the late 19th Century -- was accepting of communication with the spirits of the dead. Studies undertaken by the church during the mid-19th Century heyday of Spiritualism, including a study of apparitions and visions, reportedly found nothing out of line with the church's own teachings.

However, the popularity of Spiritualism (including its known elements of fraud) grew to the extent of becoming a denominational threat to Catholicism -- a competing church. In 1898, a proclamation by Pope Leo XIII condemned Spiritualism and required excommunication for all practitioners. Consequently, the earlier church studies were secreted away.

"The decree was essentially a restraining order which forbid church members from contacting their deceased family and friends," Mary asserts.

But for Mary, the earlier and accepting policy of the church is the most enlightened.

"My book is not a book of heresy. It's a book of companionship and inspiration," she maintains. "So many people have had some kind of sign from a loved one who has crossed over, but when they want to talk about it, they are told by their priest that it is evil. "

The big question Mary asks is, 'If we can talk to God and the Saints in Heaven, why can't we talk to Grandma in Heaven?'

Since being turned out from the Catholic Church in her community, Mary has joined the Spiritus Christi Catholic Church in Rochester. Mary describes her fellow members as 'misfits' -- gay persons, divorcees, unwed mothers and mystics like herself -- who profess the Catholicism in which they were raised, but who have been turned away from their home churches.

"The Communion of Saints" can also be purchased at Touch of Grayce in Geneseo and at the Abby of the Genesee. Mary will be doing other book signings in Lily Dale on August 17 and at the Livonia Autumn in the Village Festival on Sept. 14.

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