

Gifts of Grace Ministry Newsletter

March - April, 2015



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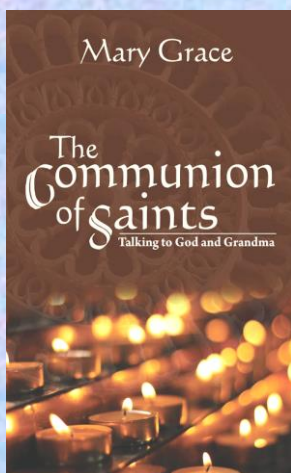
Greetings Friends & Saints:

Last year at this time, I wrote in the newsletter about a year-round practice in our home, which we call “wood -therapy.” This involves cutting, splitting, loading, unloading and stacking lots of fire wood to heat our home in the winter. Whenever family or friends need someone to talk to, we have them help with the wood work while they share their problems. It’s a mental, physical and spiritual exercise; great for the mind, body and soul.

Our sub-freezing weather of late has provided ample opportunities for wood-therapy and inspired me to write more about it. Over the last thirty years many people have participated in our organic counseling service. Each person that shows up to help is facing a particular issue. The problems vary: job stress, unemployment, divorce, alcohol or drug recovery, a family death, or a mental health concern. Some have been integrating back into society following a jail term or lengthy hospitalization.

Much camaraderie occurs while doing the work as stories, jokes and local gossip are shared, and politics are discussed. There are many laughs, along with frigid hands and feet during the freezing winter and sticky sweat in the searing heat of summer. It’s not unusual for a little blood to spill and an occasional trip to the hospital is warranted from an accident. Working with axes, sledgehammers, heavy logs, and a wood splitter can be dangerous; it requires focused attention.

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Due to the labor intensive task and socialization, wood-therapy keeps the mind occupied. Troublesome thoughts are crowded out and given a reprieve. Worries melt away like snow on a sunny spring day. In reflecting on this beneficial exercise, I realized something special is happening.

As we battle to keep the house warm each year, our “wood angels” are battling with the weight of their individual crosses. In our shared struggle to survive, however, hearts and souls are healing, and eternal bonds are forming. It reminds me of the words of Jesus when he said, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:30).

My burdens are certainly made lighter by those who selflessly give of their time, energy, and physical ability to help keep my family cozy for the winter. These wounded warriors of the woodpile provide much more than heat; they remind me of how fortunate I am to have my health, my sanity, my freedom, my home, my marriage, and such great family and friends. I also know they will be there for me when I’m down and out and in need of wood-therapy.

Most of all, I am blessed with the peace of mind that comes with faith and trust in a God that always comes through. Whether it’s a homeless veteran, an overworked teacher, a parolee, a person in recovery, or a grieving spouse, God’s angels are here to help us through another day. I am truly inspired by these courageous souls who bring me hope, during their time of despair.

Sometimes we are in a position to lend a hand to someone who’s struggling. Sometimes we are the ones in need of help. Whether we are giving or receiving, we work together for the common cause of humanity as members of the communion of saints.

Love, Mary Grace

P.S. Let’s all say a prayer for those who find themselves without heat, electricity, water, or a home during this extremely harsh winter. Be sure to help your neighbor whenever you can.



Wood Therapy in Hemlock, NY

Upcoming Events with Mary Grace

Book Signing at Psychic Fair
Saturday, March 14 / 11:00 am – 4:00pm
Village Gate Square
274 North Goodman St., Rochester, NY

Science, Religion & the Supernatural

Two Opportunities to attend this presentation:

Saturday, March 28, 2015

1:00 – 3:00pm

Mythic Treasures

Village Gate Square

274 North Goodman St.

Rochester, NY 14607

Cost: \$15.00

RSVP Sue: 585-266-8350

or E-Mail: mythictreasures@gmail.com

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Saturday, April 25, 2015

1:00 – 3:00pm

Lightways Community

31 Market Street

Brockport, NY 14420

Cost: \$20.00

RSVP Judy: 585-637-6236

or E-Mail: Lightwaysjourney@aol.com

When it comes to the supernatural, science and religion often say the same things; they just use a different language. In this presentation you will learn about the science of parapsychology and how it applies to religious practices and beliefs. Come for a fascinating afternoon and an inside look at how the paranormal is a bridge between science and religion. You will discover all about:

- Parapsychology & Spiritualism
- Telepathy, ESP, and Psychic Phenomena
- The Science of Prayer
- How Science supports Religious Beliefs
- Test your ESP and level of psychic ability

To host a workshop for your spiritual group or organization, go to Mary Grace's website:

www.giftsofgraceministry.org

Mary Grace was a recent guest on:

We Don't Die Radio Show

Hosted By Sandra Champlain

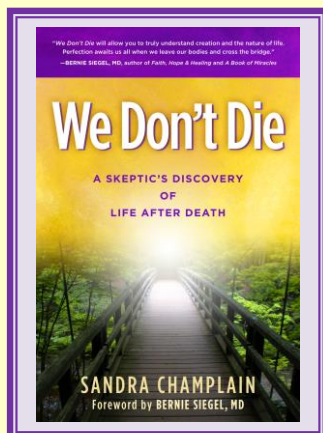
**Best-selling author of: *We Don't Die:*
*A Skeptics Discovery of Life after Death***

To listen to show go to:

www.wedontdieradio.com Episode # 53

(See next page for more information.)

We Don't Die, by Sandra Champlain



Is there any real proof of life after death? The surprising answer is “Yes”! A fear of dying and a massive dose of skepticism led Sandra Champlain on a fifteen-year journey of discovery for proof of life after death. Through the disciplines of science and medicine, she uncovered the clear, undeniable truth that we don't die. Rather, we live on and on.

In her book, Sandra explores your thoughts and beliefs, along with facts and anecdotes that will leave you without a doubt that we are so much more than our physical bodies.

Sandra Champlain invites you into her personal story of coincidence, courage and miracles that will amaze, uplift and empower you. Peppared with recipes for success and respites of humor, *We Don't Die* will have a profound and lasting effect on your life.

www.wedontdieradio.com

Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of the Cross

The phrase “dark night of the soul” comes from a poem by St. John of the Cross, a Spanish Carmelite monk and mystic. This eight-stanza poem outlines the soul's journey from the distractions and entanglements of the world to the perfect peace and harmony of union with God.

The monk taught that one seeking God will cast off all attachments to this world and live a life of austerity. Before attaining union with God, however, the soul must pass through a personal experience of Christ's passion. This time of testing and agony is accompanied by confusion, fear, and uncertainty—including doubts of God—but on the other side are Christ's glory, serenity, and a mystical union with God.

Today the phrase “dark night of the soul” is often used generically to describe any type of mental, emotional, or spiritual anguish.

Watch this beautiful You Tube video. Click on link below or picture at right. Or Google “*The Dark Night of the Soul by Loreena McKennitt*” and look for the video with this photo to read English version of poem (page 2 of site).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atVdF-uiPBI>



Featured Saint: Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591)

Feast Day: March 4 (Also, Dec. 14)

Patron Saint of Mystics & Poets



John de Yepes was born in Fontiveros, Spain, the youngest child of poor silk weavers. His father died young, so his widowed mom sent the seven year-old boy to a school for the underprivileged in Medina. John was taken in by the head of the town's hospital, who gave him a job nursing the poorest and neediest of people. He spent his teenage years earning a degree in humanities at the local Jesuit College.

One day, while in prayer, John received a message instructing him to serve God in a way that followed the older, stricter orders of the Church. He started on his path by joining the nearby Carmelites, who had a house in Medina. He was accepted into the order in February of 1563 and took the name of "John of St. Mathias." In 1567 he was ordained in Salamanca where he continued his theological and philosophical studies at the University.

The young priest did not like how lax and worldly the Carmelite life had become. Armed with conviction, he set out to reform the order to its original archaic style. As synchronicity would have it, a nun came to establish a convent in Medina with the same idea of re-establishing the "Primitive Rule of Carmel"; her name was (Saint) Teresa of Avila. The two young, ambitious clergy joined forces. Teresa gave John the use of a donated house to set up his first monastery for friars under the new principles. It opened in November, 1568; the same day he changed his name to "John of the Cross."

In 1571 Teresa convinced John to become the director of the Carmelite "Convent of the Visitation" in Avila. For the next five years the reformed order became popular and spread widely. It became known as the Discalced Carmelites, which means "barefoot or shoeless"; it referred to the custom of wearing only sandals on their feet.

The fellow Carmelites of John of the Cross did not appreciate his determination to return the order to its harsher, basic lifestyle. Their more comfortable, modern way of life was threatened; this trouble maker had to go. He was commanded to return to his provincial order in Medina. When he refused to leave the convent, the monk was taken prisoner; it was December 3, 1577. John was dragged off to Toledo and imprisoned in a tiny cell where he suffered beatings and malnourishment; his diet consisted of bread and water. It was during this time that he was inspired to write one of his greatest works of poetry, *The Spiritual Canticle*.

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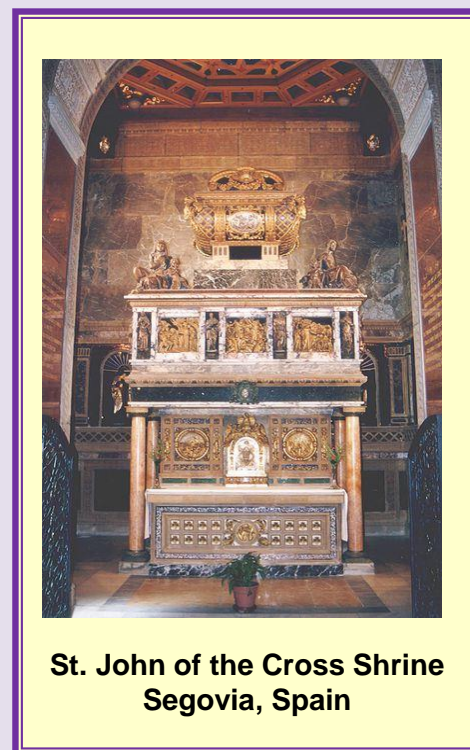
After nine months, John escaped from his prison by crawling through a small window in an adjoining cell and prying the hinges off the cell door. He made his way back to Teresa's convent where he was nursed back to health by the nuns; he recovered further at a hospital in Santa Cruz. He was then sent to the remote monastery of El Calvario where he was safe from recapture. It was here the monk wrote his notable works, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, *Sayings of Light and Love*, and *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*.

John continued with his reformation of the Carmelite order and went on to establish over twenty monasteries. He also continued helping Teresa by founding additional convents. Between the years of 1578-1580 bitter disputes arose between the Discalced and the Calced Carmelites. The feud was finally settled in 1580 when Pope Gregory XIII signed a decree authorizing separation between the two groups. A Vicar General was appointed to head the new order and John of the Cross was elected as a counselor under him.

Although the Discalced Carmelites won their independence, arguments arose within the leadership; John of the Cross disagreed with the way his order was being run. Once again, the trouble maker had to be dealt with. John was removed from his position and sent to an isolated monastery in Andalusia called "La Penuela." The austere conditions led to a severe skin infection called "erysipelas"; he was sent to another monastery in Ubeda for treatment. His condition only worsened, however, and on December 14, 1591 he died at the age of forty-nine.

There were debates about where the monk should be buried, so it was settled by carving up his body. One arm and leg went to the monastery in Ubeda, Spain. A hand and leg were displayed at the Oratory of San Juan Cruz in Ubeda. The head and torso went to the monastery in Segovia where the remains are kept in a marble case above the altar.

John of the Cross was canonized in 1726 by Pope Benedict XII. He was declared Doctor of the Universal Church by Pope Pius XI in 1926 and is considered one of the great mystics of the Catholic Faith. His feast day could not be originally celebrated on the day of his death because it fell during the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. March 4 became the first declared date for the Feast Day of St. John. In 1969, the day was reverted to December 14; both feast days are recognized.



**St. John of the Cross Shrine
Segovia, Spain**