

Gifts of Grace Ministry Newsletter

May - June, 2015



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Greetings Friends & Saints:

“Obstacles in life are opportunities for spiritual growth.” I learned this lesson many years ago while reading books by Wayne Dyer, the renowned spiritual teacher. It has been my mantra ever since. I recently had such an opportunity with the passing of my beloved, seventeen year-old cat, Stinky.

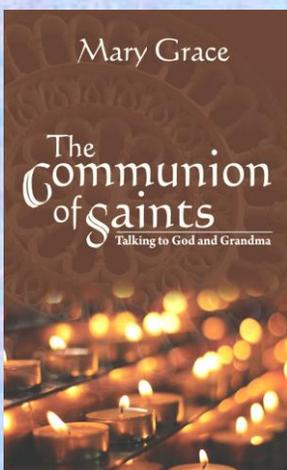
Although I have been helping grieving people for years, through my ministry, suddenly I was the one in need of comfort. As synchronicity would have it, Sandra Champlain’s book, *We Don’t Die*, arrived in the mail just when I needed it most. From Sandra’s book, along with others, I learned even more about grief.

Often the relationships we develop with our pets can be stronger than the bonds we form with people. One reason for this is because we typically spend more time with our pets, than with family or friends. In addition, our animals don’t scold us, judge us, or hold a grudge. They are also great listeners whose mission is to simply provide unconditional love and joy.

I discovered that one of the reasons we came to the physical world was to learn how to fully love. If you are fully and deeply grieving, that means you have fully and deeply loved. A profound relationship with a pet is one way to accomplish that goal.

From the many spiritual books I have read over the years, I have often practiced being the “observer.” This means mentally stepping back from your body and looking at whatever situation you are in. It helps you see things objectively, which can aid with the grieving process. One particular day, I did just that and had an incredible experience:

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That morning, while trying to meditate, I was sitting at the kitchen table staring out the window at the birds in the feeder. At this point Stinky had been gone a week and I was missing her terribly. She was my meditation kitty, she sat in my lap every morning; how could I possibly meditate without her? I had a total meltdown, sobbing uncontrollably. In the midst of this, I somehow shifted my point of view to become the "observer."

I suddenly found myself standing, outside of my body, in the middle of the kitchen, looking back at "me," sitting in the chair crying. I was totally awestruck when I witnessed, an extremely large, seven-foot, angel bend over my weeping body and wrap his enormous wings around me. This angel was so huge that I saw my entire life-form, along with the chair, disappear within the caring folds of his wings. For the second time in my life, I saw and recognized my guardian angel, Nephi. It was a humbling, healing moment, which greatly eased my pain.

Over the weeks, as I gradually processed my grief, I noticed another shift taking place within me. I became more focused on the present moment and found myself practicing "mindfulness." As we grieve, we are forced to live one day at a time, and often one hour or moment at time. I realized that I was in "eternal time." The word "eternal" actually means "now" or "timeless." In heaven there is no past or future; there is only the present moment. I was once again reminded of scripture; the 23rd Psalm says, "In dying we are born to 'eternal' (present moment) life." Death is a lesson in mindfulness and living in the "now."

Grieving, I realized, was a sacred, spiritual experience that brought me closer to God, as well as my family, friends and pets in spirit. It taught me to be mindful and appreciate each precious moment we have here on earth. So take time to play with your cat, pet your dog, hug your furry companion, and be aware of all life's blessings. Our pets are often our greatest teachers and provide us with ample opportunities for spiritual growth. Be grateful to your four-legged friends in heaven for the gift of love and joy they brought. Be sure to thank the ones who broke your heart and grew your soul.

A big thanks to my little girl in heaven, Stinky.
Love, Mary Grace



In Memory of Stinky

Upcoming Events with Mary Grace

Book Signing at Psychic Fair
 Saturday, May 9 / 11:00 am – 7:00pm
 Plymouth Spiritualist Church
 29 Vick Park A, Rochester, NY 14607

Science, Religion & the Supernatural

Wednesday, May 10, 2015

6:00 - 9:00pm

Barnes & Noble

RIT, Point Park

Jefferson Road, Rochester, NY 14607

Cost: \$10.00 donation to Rochester UFO Club

RSVP: <http://www.meetup.com/ufos-230/>

(Must be a member or registered guest to attend)

Let me know if you want to be my guest.

Special Event: Lake Ontario Spiritual Retreat!

Getaway for some Summer Solstice Solitude at a private
 beach and lakeside cottage!

Hosted by Lightways Journey

Friday, June 19 – Saturday, June 25

Featuring:

Sharing the Sacred Medicine of the Life Giving Waters,
 by Barbara Konish

Connecting with Loved Ones, Angels & Water Spirit
 By Mary Grace

Also: Yoga, Meditation, Psychic Readings, beach walks
 bonfires & great food.

For more info go to: <http://www.lightwaysjourney.com/>

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

www.giftsofgraceministry.org

Ode to Pets in Paradise

No flowers, no funeral, no Mass, no cards
 Losing a pet is incredibly hard.
 To love a pet, oh, what a risk we take
 To know eventually, our heart will break.
 For God has provided our best-est friend
 But we must return her back in the end.
 In the meanwhile, we journey as one
 Sharing laughter and tears, til our time is done.
 Sharing joys and sorrow, dreams of tomorrow.
 Sharing regrets and shame, illness and pain.
 And sleepless nights, when no one else was there
 We cuddled together, I know that you cared.
 Though the joy you brought, has ended with strife
 I know you're still watching over my life.
 Now you're my angel who slips gently in
 To sit on my lap when my prayers begin
 In the still space, words need not be spoken
 We meet again where hearts are unbroken
 When you share your love, with nothing to gain.
 No one can know the depth of your pain.
 No flowers, no funerals, no Mass, no cards
 Losing a pet is incredibly hard.

By Mary Grace

Do Dogs go to Heaven?

One of the questions I get asked the most is,
 "Do our pets go to heaven when we die?"
 My answer is always the same:

***"Of Course, would you consider it heaven
 if your pets weren't there?"***



Our pets are God's pets too. To share your heart with an animal is to give it to God.

Featured Saint: Saint Joan of Arc (1412-1431)

Feast Day: May 30

Patron Saint of Soldiers, Military & France



Joan of Arc is considered a heroine of France and is a popular Catholic saint. Nicknamed the *Maid of Orleans*, Jeanne d'Arc was born on January 6, 1412 in Demremy, a town located in the Champagne region of France. She was the daughter of Jacques and Isabelle d'Arc and had two brothers and two sisters. They were a devoutly religious, peasant-class family.

By the age of twelve, Joan claimed that she could directly communicate with the saints. She often heard the voices of St. Michael, St. Catherine and St. Margaret (an example of psychic ability). When she was thirteen, Joan heard God speak to her. As a result, she vowed to live her life for Christ and to remain a virgin.

Joan's family lived during a desperate time of national crises, known as the hundred year war. It started in 1337 in dispute over the French throne. France was overrun by English armies, which were ruled by Henry VI. In addition, the area of Burgundy, France (Burgundians) allied with the English. The two groups occupied the northern part of France, including Paris and Orleans.

The rest of France did not have a ruler because the heir apparent, known as the "Dauphin," Charles, was powerless to enter his own capital of Reims for coronation. Joan's village was on the frontier between the two warring factions; as a result, her town was burned to the ground.

When she was seventeen, Joan heard the voice of God calling her to drive the enemies of France from the land. Led by the voices (clairaudience) and visions (clairvoyance) of the saints, Joan traveled to Vaucoulers to convince the Dauphin to let her join the cause. Her goal was to see that he was crowned King of France.

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The illiterate farm girl claimed the voice of God was instructing her to take charge of her country's army and lead it to victory. Her guides also told her to wear men's clothes, cut her hair and pose as a regular soldier; it would help her cause. In addition, she was to carry a banner with the name and image of Jesus. The desperate French leaders were being defeated; therefore, they felt they had nothing to lose by granting Joan's request to lead their armed forces.

The Dauphin provided Joan with a horse, battle ax, and a suite of white armor. She stole a sword from behind a church altar. On May 7, 1429 she led her most famous battle at the key stronghold city of Orleans. The victory enabled the Dauphin to go to Reims to be crowned King Charles VII.

However, Joan could not be satisfied until Paris was regained by the French. She led the army to victory again, but afterwards she was captured by the Burgundians who sold her to the British. With a royal ax to grind, Joan was taken to Rouen, France for sentencing. She was charged with witchcraft, due to the voices she heard, and for heresy, due to dressing like a man. She endured nine brutal months in prison.

After a trial that was stacked against her, on May 30, 1431 the nineteen year-old was convicted of heresy. She was tied to a tall pillar where she requested a cross be provided for her to look at during the execution. She was also given a cross made of sticks, which was put in the front of her dress. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in the Rouen town square.

The family petitioned to clear her name and in 1456 the Pope overturned her guilty verdict. For centuries she was honored as a saint, but was not canonized until 1920.

Joan of Arc's feast day is May 30 and she is the patron saint of the military, soldiers and France. She is one of the youngest, most beloved saints, who taught us what faith really means.



**St. Joan of Arc
Burning at the Stake**