

# *Gifts of Grace Ministry Newsletter*

## *Holiday Edition: Nov. – Dec., 2015*



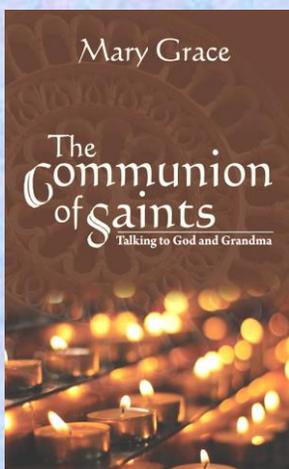
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### **Greetings Friends & Saints:**

*“You can’t measure spiritual riches with a worldly yardstick.” \**

These words of wisdom are very appropriate for the holiday season. It’s a time to count our blessings and give whatever we can, no matter how small, to someone less fortunate. It’s in our common struggle for survival that we also share our common bond as spiritual beings and children of God. And at a time when money and resources seem to be in short supply, we may not realize how wealthy we really are. Perhaps we can learn something from a few Christmas story classics.

In the timeless movie, *It’s A Wonderful Life*, George Bailey is a man who is struggling to keep his banking business afloat, while trying to provide for a rapidly growing family. It was important for him to make an honest living, providing others in Bedford Falls with a place of their own to call “home.” Throughout it all, he never gave up his values. George was a gentle, kind-hearted soul with many friends. Although he didn’t realize it, he was the wealthiest man in town.

In *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, Charlie struggles with life in general; he can never seem to get anything right. Frustrated with the blatant materialism of the holiday, he struggles to understand what Christmas is all about. And maybe because of his own shortcomings, he identifies with the smallest, most unwanted Christmas tree and gives it a home. In the end, his friends learn a lesson in humility and realize Charlie Brown and his little tree are not so bad after all; they just needed a little love.

In *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, Rudolph struggles with being different and a misfit among misfits; all he wants is to fit in. As an outcast he finds his independence and learns he can’t run away from his problems. His disability becomes a unique gift that helps others when it’s needed most. He discovers the importance of being true to himself.

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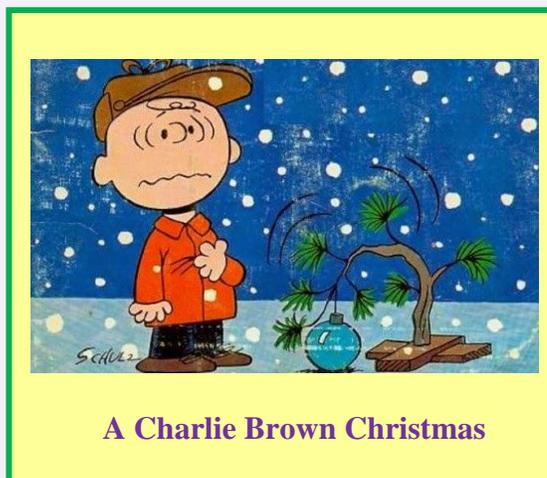
In *The Little Drummer Boy*, Aaron's parents were killed by bandits and his home was torched. His world was decimated and his deep wounds caused him to hate all people; he struggled to find someone who truly cared. When he met the baby Jesus, he realized that he too was loved, and his heart was opened. Although he had no gift to give, he bestowed the infant king with a simple song on his little drum. It was the most precious offering, however, because it came with love.

In each of these stories we find the main characters share a common struggle of having to overcome a tremendous challenge. We can empathize with them because we are all George Baileys, Charlie Browns, Rudolphs and little drummer boys. We all go through struggles and feel like taking the bridge at times. But we can also be the Clarence in someone's life. We can be that guardian angel that's willing to jump in the icy waters of despair to hold someone's hand or be a shoulder to cry on. Help others understand that their life is worth the struggle, you hear their cries, and they matter.

So what if your holidays are anything but a wonderful life? Try to focus on the reason for the season and take this opportunity to make a difference in someone's life. Make a phone call, write a letter, send a card, pay a visit, volunteer; give a gift from your heart. For the greatest gifts cannot be measured by size, or cost, or quality, or popularity. The most meaningful presents are the ones that can't be replaced, exchanged, or traded for something bigger and better. The best gifts are the ones we already have, a good friend, a parent, a spouse, a sibling, a child, or a pampered pet. But most of all, the greatest gift is love.

Spiritual riches cannot be measured with a worldly yardstick\*. Count your blessings, open your heart and know that you are as wealthy as George Bailey. At the end of our journey together, we will come out a little stronger, a little braver, a little wiser, a little more humble, and with some serenity in our soul. Have a peaceful holiday and don't forget, every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings.

*God bless us, everyone  
Love, Mary Grace*



**A Charlie Brown Christmas**

\* A favorite quote from one of my favorite books, *Love Without Conditions*, by Paul Ferrini.

**Mary Grace Book Signing Event:**

***Annual Winter Parafest***

***Presented by: Genesee Valley Paranormal Investigators***

***The Historic (and haunted) Avon Inn***

***January 3, 2016 : 10am – 6:00pm***

***55 East Main Street, Avon, NY***

***Cost: \$5.00***



***Also, Presentation by Mary Grace: Time TBA  
Science, Religion & the Supernatural***

***For more information go to:***

***<http://www.gvpi.org/>***

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***The Feast of St. Nicholas of Myra -- December 6***

In many European countries and American families, it's tradition for children to hang their stockings out on December 5, the night before St. Nicholas Day. Kids are sure to put their Christmas wish-list inside for Santa to find. In the morning they discover their stocking filled with all sorts of goodies, but the list will be gone. This is how Santa knows what to bring them for Christmas. St. Nicholas was the featured saint in last year's holiday newsletter. You may read his story by going to Nov. – Dec. '14 Edition at this link: [http://www.giftsofgraceministry.org/Newsletters\\_\\_Media.html](http://www.giftsofgraceministry.org/Newsletters__Media.html)

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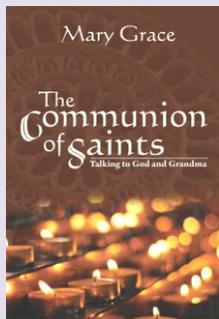
***The Spirits of Christmas***

**The Holidays can be a difficult time for those who have recently lost loved ones. Learn how to stay connected with your heavenly family and friends to help heal the grief. Consider hosting this special, educational, inspirational & interactive workshop for your family, friends or organization:**

- **Learn the Language of spirits through “signs.”**
- **Share your holiday memories & stories of after-death communications.**
- **Set up a “sign” with a loved one in heaven.**
- **Contact a spirit friend in a guided meditation.**

**For more workshops & info go to: [www.giftsofgraceministry.org](http://www.giftsofgraceministry.org)**

***Do you know someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one  
this holiday season?***



Consider purchasing this inspirational, self-help book  
in memory of their special angel in heaven.

***The Communion of Saints, Talking to God and Grandma  
By Mary Grace***

To learn more or order a copy in paperback or Kindle,  
go to: <http://www.giftsofgraceministry.org/Book.html>

### Testimonials

Thanks to those who responded to my request with an endorsement for my public speaking. I hope to share my stories with a wider audience to help inspire those who are struggling with their faith or the loss of a loved one. I am available for your conference, seminar or organizational event. To read more testimonials and watch video presentations, please go to my media page:

[http://www.giftsofgraceministry.org/Newsletters\\_Media.html](http://www.giftsofgraceministry.org/Newsletters_Media.html)

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*I had the opportunity and pleasure to hear two talks given by Mary Grace. She presented for a private spiritual group in my home, and was a guest speaker for our local IANDES organization. Both events were very successful; attendees were transfixed, just as I was. Mary Grace speaks about a fascinating topic to many, probably even more so for those who are Catholic and live the dilemma Mary Grace addresses. I found her knowledge, her ability to connect and communicate so effectively, and the topics of such interest, that I sent her information to a handful of group facilitators I know, with my hearty recommendation for a future speaker.*

**Robin Barr, Facilitator, Orange County IANDES, [www.orangecountyiands.com](http://www.orangecountyiands.com)  
(International Association of Near-Death Studies) Tustin, California  
Product Developer for Cold Sores Begone Stick, [www.ColdSoresBegone.com](http://www.ColdSoresBegone.com), and  
Canker Sores Begone Stick, [www.CankerSoresBegone.com](http://www.CankerSoresBegone.com)**

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*Mary Grace gave a very inspirational talk at our Universalist Church Conference last year. Many commented about how much they learned from her and that it was well presented and very inspiring. After her talk there was a "question and answer period" and she was able to answer everyone's questions effectively. It was a great learning experience for all of us. I received one of the early copies of her book and could not put it down. Many sections I have read more than once.*

**Chester Perkins: Universalist Church Conference  
First Universalist Church, Central Square, NY**

*Instead of writing about a featured saint in this issue, I decided to reprint a story from last year's holiday newsletter. As we all know, this can be a difficult time of year for many. If you know of someone who is grieving a loss this year, please feel free to pass this on. See link on page 3 for last year's saint, the story of St. Nicholas.*

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## Facing the Holidays, During A Loss



At Thanksgiving dinner, it's a tradition in our family for each of us to mention one or two things we are grateful for. Usually we are most thankful for our loved ones, our health, a job, a home, and for the bounty of food. It's interesting to note that the things that matter to us most are *not* our possessions. When we are gathered with family and friends, especially those we don't see often, the material things are not as important.

But what if there is an empty place at your dinner table this year? The holidays can be a cruel reminder of someone that is no longer a part of our life in the physical world. We can, however, use special occasions as a way to stay connected to our loved ones in spirit. Holidays can also provide us with an opportunity to actively participate in the grieving process, which will aid in healing.

One way is by setting a place at the dinner table for the one who is "missing" from the event. Although some of the adults might think this is strange, children often enjoy the "game." As dishes are being passed around, be sure to fill the designated plate with that person's favorite foods.

The first time I set a place for my mother, my siblings didn't say much, but gave me the rolled-eyes, crazy look. However, when I went to place some cranberry sauce on Mom's plate, my brother protested stating, "Don't you dare, Mom hated cranberries!" This began a lively conversation and debate, which lightened the mood and opened the door for further conversation about Mom. It turned a not-so-normal and sad day, into a fun event. After that, my nieces argued over who got to sit next to Grandma each holiday.

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Many will be spending Thanksgiving after surviving the loss of a home, good health or a job. Yet, there is always something to be grateful for. It is in our losses that we are forced to reflect on what is truly important. Part of my spiritual practice each night is simply counting my blessings. In my bedtime meditation, I always give thanks for the food I had to eat, the roof over my head, and a warm bed to sleep in. A large percentage of the world's population does not have these basic needs met on a daily basis. Therefore, not only am I grateful for the necessities, everything else is considered a bonus. Despite our losses, we need to focus on the "good" in our life, it's another way to help us heal.

Turning to another holiday, Christmas shopping can be one of the most difficult and saddest events, when you are grieving the loss of a loved one. One helpful practice is to shop for that person, just like past years. Take the time to find that unique item and then, either keep it for yourself, or give it to someone else. You can also purchase an ornament for the Christmas tree, or buy something special for the grave site, such as a wreath or an angel.

Here are some other ideas to help you through the holidays when suffering a loss: Participate in a fund-raising event, adopt-a-family to buy gifts for, go on a pilgrimage to a favorite spot, write a poem, sing a song, or simply go on a walk to reflect and remember. Make a new, annual tradition in memory of that person who will always hold a place in your heart.

There are many ways in which we can stay connected to our loved ones in spirit. Every little act of remembrance reminds us that our relationships never end, they merely change. Whether residing in heaven or on earth, remember all those who share in your life, give thanks, and celebrate the season. No matter where we live, we are all members of the communion of saints; love never dies.

May the Saints & the Spirits of Christmas  
Be with you.

Love, Mary Grace



"Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives. When he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"

Clarence, *It's A Wonderful Life*