

Gifts of Grace Ministry Newsletter

Winter Edition, 2016



Table of Contents

Page 1-2: Sundays
With Aunt Marie

Page 3: Events

Page 4: Holidays
& Holy Days

Page 5- 6: Featured
Saint: Valentine

Greetings Friends & Saints:

March 12 of this year will mark an historic event; it will be my Aunt Marie's 100th birthday. It may not be a national holiday, or even an unusual accolade anymore, but it certainly is an important occasion. This milestone is significant for the countless people whose lives Marie has touched; one of those is mine.

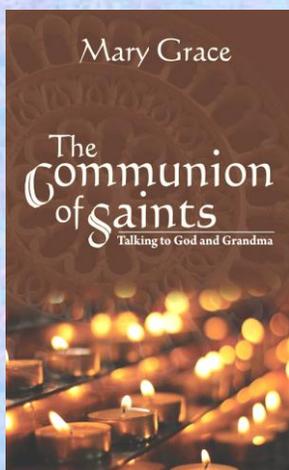
On most Sundays, I visit Aunt Marie after church. She has been, and continues to be, a great blessing and inspiration to me. At the age of one-hundred, she still lives on her own; in the same home she raised her family. But the biggest reason I admire her is because I know how much loss she has endured over the years. So many people in her life have died, including her grandparents, parents, spouse, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, two children and myriad friends and coworkers. She must hold some sort of record for the number of funerals attended.

One day I asked, "Aunt Marie, you must know more people on the other side, in heaven, than here on earth." She nodded her head and said, matter-of-factly, "Yes, I guess I do." And yet she goes on, and she does it with grace, without wallowing in self-pity, remorse or regrets. She somehow maintains her positive outlook, sense of humor, but most of all, her faith.

I'm not sure I would do as well at her age, but Aunt Marie knows what many of you know also. The love bonds we forge in life, do not end with death, but continue after we leave the physical world; they are eternal. And from time to time our family and friends will remind us they are still around by giving us signs.

I asked Aunt Marie to give me a sign, when she gets to heaven. We decided that her particular calling card would have something to do with the game of golf and her beloved Tiger Woods.

(Continued on page 2)



Although I knew very little about golf, over the years Marie taught me all about the game while watching Tiger on many Sundays. Perhaps in her sign to me, she will drop golf balls from heaven, instead of pennies.

In March of last year Aunt Marie lost her oldest child, Philip. The same week, my beloved, 17 year-old cat, Stinky died. During our Sunday visits, we commiserated in our grief. We shared stories, memories and feelings about our cherished “children.” I sometimes felt ashamed for grieving over my cat, while Aunt Marie was mourning the loss of her 73 year old son. However, Marie never made me feel that my pain was any less than hers, and she understood that Stinky was indeed my baby, as I have no children of my own.

After several weeks, I was still feeling quite depressed when I made my weekly trip to Aunt Marie’s. She knew how down I was and proceeded to console me. She understood how much Stinky meant to me, but she explained how life goes on and I needed to move on too. I knew she was right. But how could this woman have the wherewithal to comfort me about my cat, when she had just lost her son? Why was she doing so much better in her grieving process than me? Her strength, courage and kindness were the medicine I needed to raise my spirits. I soon found my sadness replaced with awe and even greater respect for this amazing woman. In addition, I felt a deeper kinship with my dearest Aunt Marie.

My book, lectures and public education on the paranormal and communion of saints are for those who are living with great losses. My wish is to bring comfort, healing, hope and inspiration to all the Aunt Maries in the world. So when you receive a sign or some sort of after-death communication from a particular loved one, please share your experience with others. Your story may be the “chicken soup” for a grieving soul. Whether it’s pennies from heaven or golf balls, our family and friends in spirit will remind us that love is eternal and knows no bounds. May the saints be with you.

Love, Mary Grace



Aunt Marie Hochreiter

100th Birthday Celebration

For (Aunt) Marie Hochreiter

March 12, 1916 - 2016

Family & Friends Open House

Saturday, March 12, 2016

Birthday Cards welcomed by all!

Send Cards: "In Care of Mary Grace"

South Main Street, Hemlock, NY 14466

For more information contact Mary Grace

585-766-9318 or mgrace-888@outlook.com

Adoption Notice

Last March I lost my seventeen year-old baby, Stinky. In November I finally felt ready to open my heart, once again, to fill the hole in my life. My husband, Bob gave me the best birthday present ever when he took me to the local animal shelter. We adopted eight-week old, Mimi.

Our new baby has certainly been a great joy in our life. She entertains us daily with her antics and immediately took to our Christmas tree. Mimi certainly has filled that space in my heart!



Mimi prays her bedtime rosary.



Mimi's first Christmas tree!

Holidays & Holy Days

February 9: Mardi Gras

“Mardi Gras” is French for “Fat Tuesday.” It marks the last day before the start of Lent. Long ago, strict Christian Lenten rules prohibited the eating of all dairy products. Therefore, people would use their supplies of eggs, milk and butter by making pancakes; hence the name “Pancake Tuesday. The faithful celebrate with a carnival before entering the solemnity of the six- week Lenten observance.

February 10: Ash Wednesday. Lent begins

Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting and marks the beginning of Lent. Lent commemorates the forty days that Christ spent fasting in the desert while enduring temptations by Satan. The Holy day derives its name from the ashes of palm branches blessed on the previous year’s Palm Sunday. During Mass, the priest marks the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes and the words “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

“Lent” is derived from the Old English word “Lencten,” which means “spring” and refers to the lengthening of days. The purpose of lent is preparation of the believer through prayer, fasting, penance and almsgiving by serving others. It culminates on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter.

St. Valentine’s Day: February 14: See next pages for the story.

St. Patrick’s Day: March 17

St. Patrick is the Patron Saint of Ireland and, unofficially, Guinness Beer! Check out these great videos: <http://www.history.com/topics/st-patricks-day>

Holy Week - March 20: Palm Sunday March 24: Holy Thursday

March 25: Good Friday March 26: Holy Saturday

March 27: Easter Sunday!

Prayer of St. Valentine

O St. Valentine, lover of Christ and of the Church, we ask your intercession that we may learn how to love God above all things, and to selflessly love one another. O glorious St. Valentine, pray for us, that we too may have the steadfast faith of the martyrs.

Featured Saint: St. Valentine (Birthdate unknown - c. 270 AD)

Feast Day: February 14

Patron Saint of: Engaged couples,
Lovers, Beekeepers & Epilepsy



The story of St. Valentine varies because there are accounts of two men with the same name who were both martyred around the second and third century. One was a bishop in Ternia, Italy and the other was a priest in Rome. Some hagiographers claim they were one and the same person. The following account is a compilation of the various stories and common folklore attributed to St. Valentine.

Valentine or Valentinus was an early Christian priest and/or Bishop in Rome. At that time, Emperor Claudius II wanted single men to build his army because they would make better soldiers. Therefore, under Roman law, they were forbidden to marry. In defiance, Valentine secretly married couples so husbands wouldn't have to go to war. In addition, due to his refusal to honor the Roman pagan gods, Valentine was arrested for heresy.

The priest was held prisoner in the home of Judge Asterius, where his faith was tested. The judge challenged Valentine to heal his blind daughter. If successful, the jailer would do anything asked of him. The cleric put his hands over the girl's eyes and invoked the help of Jesus. Her sight was miraculously restored and Valentine was freed. Furthermore, Asterius obeyed Valentine's requests to convert to Christianity. The judge broke all the idols around his house, fasted for three days and became baptized, along with his family and entire 44 member household. The now faithful judge then freed all of his Christian inmates.

Valentine was later arrested again for continuing to convert people to Christianity and aiding Christians. Both acts were considered serious crimes. He was sent to Rome where a relationship between the saint and emperor Claudius began to grow until Valentine attempted to convince Claudius of Christianity. Claudius became furious commanding him to renounce his religion or be sentenced to death.

(Continued on page 6)

Valentine refused to abandon his faith and Christianity. While imprisoned he befriended the blind daughter of a guard and restored her eyesight. The devoted priest was beaten with clubs and beheaded on February 14, 270 AD. St. Valentine became a martyr for the Christian faith. On the day of his execution, he left the healed girl a note signed, "Your Valentine." Thus began the tradition of giving cards or "Valentines."

Valentine's death coincided with the Roman spring festival of Lupercalia. This holiday was dedicated to the goddess of fertility, Juno. On the eve of the celebration all the young women's names would be put in a box; each young man would draw out a name. The boy would then be paired with the girl he chose for the festival. In addition, there was a centuries old belief that birds choose their mates in mid February. The early Christian Church leaders adopted the Roman "Lovers' Festival" and named it for their martyred brother, St. Valentine.

Valentine's Day Facts

In the Middle Ages, young men and women drew names from a bowl to see who would be their Valentine. They would wear this name pinned onto their sleeve for one week for everyone to see. This was the origin of the expression "to wear your heart on your sleeve."

The first Valentine cards were made in the 15th century.

The tradition of sending Valentines took root in England in the 17th century.

The first mass-produced cards were made in 1840.

Richard Cadbury produced the first box of chocolates for Valentine's Day in the late 1800's.

More than 35 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolate will be sold for Valentine's Day.

Approximately 189 million roses are sold annually on this lover's holiday.

An average of 220,000 wedding proposals occurs each year on Valentine's Day.



19th Century Valentine