



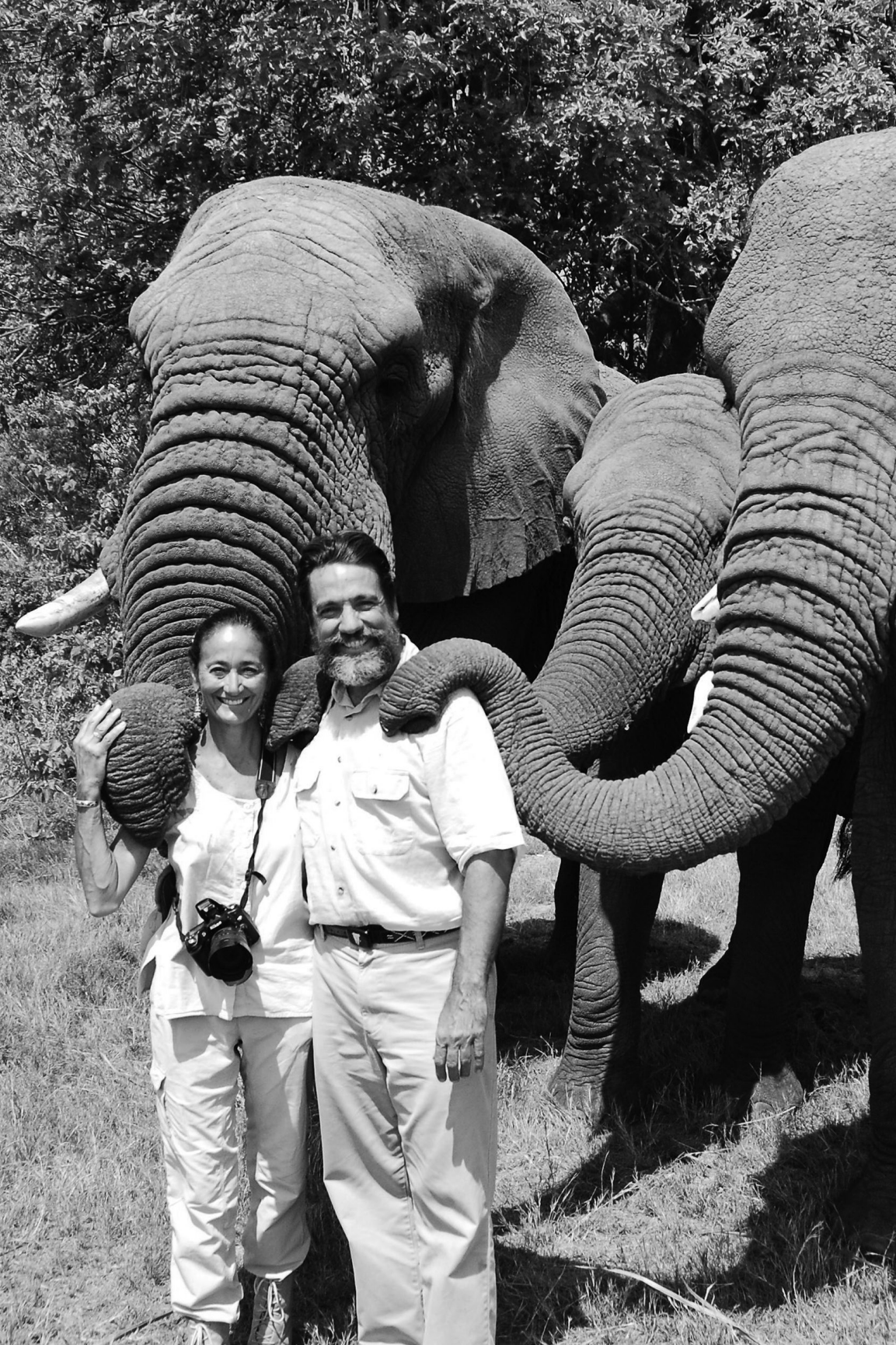
A JOURNAL OF ORTHODOX FAITH AND CULTURE

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ANIMALS, MAN AND GOD

Orthodoxy and the Animal Kingdom

Here we continue with a discussion of Dr. Joanne Stefanatos' long experience with animals at home and abroad. A veterinarian for forty-five years, she and her husband David Hetzel have made numerous visits to Europe, South America, and Africa to study animals in their native habitat. Interspersed with enlightening stories of animal behavior, Dr. Stefanatos describes the patristic Orthodox view of animal nature, as well as new research on how we relate to the animal kingdom.

RTE: Your account of raising lions in the previous interview was wonderful. Do you work with other large animals as well?

DR. JOANNE: In the clinic I mostly work with small animals and exotics, but I also take care of elephants on the Las Vegas Strip—right now I work with Tania the Elephant, as well as with snakes and birds. Our clinic takes care of many birds, and all of the state's injured raptors, such as eagles, hawks, falcons, vultures—or any other animal brought in by state workers. We've taken care of them free of charge at the clinic for the State of Nevada for forty-five years now.

If an animal needs more time to rehabilitate before we return them to the wild, I may keep them here at home. For example, we bring the coyotes and bobcats home from the clinic for the weekend where we have a hut enclosure with bedding for them, and even air conditioning.

RTE: How many wild animals have you rehabilitated?

Opposite: Dr. Joanne Stefanatos, David Hetzel, and Jabu and her sisters, Botswana, 2010.

DR. JOANNE: Thousands. In one year we easily take care of a thousand, so you can imagine after forty-five years! Last week we released three sparrow hawks that we'd raised from babies after they fell out of the nest. We also released a Harris hawk and a golden eagle; the eagle had eaten prey laden with pesticides, so we kept him at the clinic to detoxify him before releasing him in the mountains.

RTE: Do you work with large snakes as well?

DR. JOANNE: Yes. Rattlesnakes, boa constrictors, and pythons.

RTE: What kinds of diseases do snakes get, and how do you treat them?

DR. JOANNE: With snakes it is usually mouth rot, or they've eaten an infected mouse or a sick rat. They can also get bacterial or viral infections, or they sometimes can't shed the spectacle over the eye and we have to remove it. I also give them homeopathic remedies and antibiotics if they need it, and yes, we give injections to snakes too.

RTE: Do you go with natural cures such as homeopathy first, and then to standard medicines?

DR. JOANNE: If they are running high fevers, or have foul-smelling bacterial infections, then you have to do both at the same time because you want fast results. I also do electronic acupuncture on snakes and birds, and spinal adjustments on snakes, birds, dogs, cats, and horses. It helps them tremendously.

RTE: Can you explain homeopathy for readers who may not be familiar with it? I know that it was very popular in the 19th and early 20th century, and that some of the Optina Monastery Russian elders prescribed homeopathic remedies.

DR. JOANNE: God created everything necessary on this earth to heal man's illnesses. Many Orthodox elders used herbs, plants and flowers to heal themselves, people, and animals. Homeopathic remedies are made from diluted amounts of natural substances such as trees, plants, herbs, and minerals. They are non-toxic, non-invasive medicines that can treat a person or an animal on a physical, mental and emotional level. Homeopathic remedies have a high degree of efficacy and are used in eighty countries, all over the

world, in some places for over two centuries. Homeopathy is based on the principle of *similea similibus curentur* “like cures like”. Homeopathic remedies are chosen to match a person’s or animal’s unique profile of symptoms, and re-establishes equilibrium in the body.

RTE: Are there also homeopathic vaccines?

DR. JOANNE: Yes, I’ve done a lot of research on homeopathic vaccines, but I can’t publish it until I retire because the Veterinary Boards don’t know anything about homeopathy yet and you are on uncharted territory. I’ve fought them so many times over the past decades to be able to use homeopathy and I’m still using it. Again, Glory be to God.

RTE: Are more veterinarians now using homeopathy?

DR. JOANNE: Yes, the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association now has over 5000 members, and some in academia as well. In Las Vegas we have two other veterinarians who are starting to use homeopathy.

RTE: How do you support this policy of caring for every hurt wild animal that comes your way?

DR. JOANNE: Previously, if people wanted to leave something we would ask for a donation of food, but last year we incorporated as the Agape Animal Sanctuary. Now people can also donate to this nonprofit corporation. The donations don’t yet pay for the drugs, but they do pay for feeding the animals.

A Horse, a Cat, and a Chihuahua

RTE: Can you tell us about your more difficult or dramatic cases?

DR. JOANNE: A story from years ago that comes to mind was a horse that had a circular tumor in his mouth on the hard palate. We didn’t know if it was malignant or not, so we put him under general anesthesia. Although veterinary surgeons usually use a metal device to keep the mouth open, in this case, it couldn’t be placed well without touching the tumor. Only my narrow hand would fit, so I had to reach in without seeing what I was doing, put a snare around the tumor, cauterize it, and pull the tumor out without breaking it. No one else wanted to take the risk because if the horse’s jaw involuntarily contracted under anesthesia because of the sensitive area, you

could lose your hand. I prayed and it came out perfectly—a real answer to prayer. Just to be able to help animals is the best thing in the world.

RTE: Another favorite story?

DR. JOANNE: Well, my sister loves the story about Fanbelt Annie. She was a six month-old stray cat who was brought in covered with blood. She'd crawled up into the fanbelt of the car, as cats do to stay warm in the winter. When the car started she couldn't get out fast enough and her back two legs were shredded—bones hanging out and muscles detached. Animal Control brought her in and said, "Just put her down, she's half gone already." I looked in her eyes and said "Oh my gosh, you poor thing." She looked back at me and communicated, "I want to live." So I said, "Alright," and we took care of her. She went through two surgeries and we had her at the clinic for six months. Finally, she was walking again, and because everyone loved her, there was a lot of debate over who would adopt her. That was Fanbelt Annie.

Another time, a small Chihuahua mix was brought in by her owner. The family had just adopted her from the shelter where she'd been spayed, and when the owner came home from work he found her walking on her intestines. He brought her in and said, "We've only had her for two days, but I love her." I said, "Look, we'll do everything we can to save her," so I rushed her to surgery, and if I hadn't used homeopathy, she would have died of peritonitis. She comes in now every year for her vaccines, and is so sweet.

RTE: Do you also deal with large animals native to the area?

DAVID: Yes, we once tried to introduce a wolf here at home to live with the lions, but that didn't work, so I had to build an enclosure for the wolf in front of the house. We also had a young and very friendly coyote, so we put her in with the wolf when we went to Africa, but when we came back the wolf had taught the coyote to be wild. She just wanted to be free. We had planned to release her when she came of age anyway, which was a month later.

DR. JOANNE: My brother Michael, who was feeding them, said that the coyote was friendly until about a week before our return, when she became more and more wild, and because they were staring at him, he knew they would jump him if he went into the enclosure.

RTE: How did he know?

DR. JOANNE: It's universal with both wolves and lions. If they stare straight at you, and you blink, they'll jump you.

DAVID: You just have to be aware of the intelligence that they have, and respect it. Everything is awareness and attention.

Animal Euthanasia

RTE: I'd like to ask now about a topic that many of us are uncertain about: euthanasia for animals. Although we don't want them to suffer, aren't we taking the decision out of God's hands?

DR. JOANNE: First of all, it's not really taking it out of God's hands, because God allows both humans and animals to live a certain life span, and to some degree our genes dictate this timing. On the other hand, if we do everything in our power to keep an animal alive longer than his natural span, even though our motive is good, we are also taking it out of God's hands. Of course, we do this out of love, and often because we don't want to be without the animal, we don't want to part from them. I hate putting animals to sleep and I only do it if they are suffering. Also, I never go by just what the owner thinks they want to do. I'll look in the animal's eyes and talk to them, and I can always tell if they are ready to pass on or not—often they want to live, and even if the animal is dying, I send them home. I tell their owners what to look for, and when to bring them back. Usually the owners are willing. I only euthanize animals that are so old and suffering that they are going to hurt themselves in the house. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to do it.

Relating to Animals

RTE: So, when you speak to animals, do you think they understand your words, or more the feeling and the love behind them?

DR. JOANNE: The feeling and love, but they do understand words as well. It's been proven by teaching American Sign Language to Koko, a lowland mountain gorilla who was taught more than 500 words by associating a feeling with each word. She can also answer a telephone. Once she said that she wanted a cat for her birthday, so was given a small kitten that she loved very much. When the kitten was killed by a car she cried high-pitched sobs, and when the kitten was mentioned later, she signed "sad/frown" and "sleep/cat."



David Hetzel and Simba the Lioness, 2000, Las Vegas.



Recuperating coyote awaiting release into the wild.

RTE: Is communicating with animals a gift that anyone can develop, and what do you think of the so-called animal communicators that have appeared in the last few years? Are they doing a real service, or is it sometimes more wishful thinking?

DR. JOANNE: A true ability to communicate with animals is a God-given talent, and a gift of grace for both people and animals if it is used in God's name. Some animal communicators are "New Agers," who deny the Holy Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. These do not have the whole truth and mislead people into thinking that animals reincarnate, just as they profess humans do. They have been fooled by the demons to believe that animals have a destiny apart from God, not realizing that there is no life without Jesus Christ, the Creator of animals.

The Animal Kingdom's Connection to God

RTE: What would you say about animals' connection to God, and the help that they give to all of us?

DR. JOANNE: Well, animals were affected by the Fall of Man, but they aren't corrupted by it in the same way we are. They are obedient to God and it is God Who commands them to give that help. For example, Elder Zosima couldn't dig the desert ground to bury St. Mary of Egypt because he was an old man, so God commanded the biggest lion in the desert to come bury her. Although the elder was afraid he was about to be killed, the lion went to the body of the saint, washed her feet with his tongue, and then started digging.

RTE: I'm glad you mentioned this, because I have the passage here from St. Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Life of St. Mary of Egypt*.

...Then Zosima thought: "It is time to do as she wished [to bury the saint after her death]. But how am I to dig a grave with nothing in my hands?" And then he saw nearby a small piece of wood left by some traveler in the desert. Picking it up he began to dig the ground. But the earth was hard and dry and did not yield to the efforts of the elder. He grew tired and covered with sweat. He sighed from the depths of his soul and lifting up his eyes he saw a big lion standing close to the saint's body and licking her feet.

At the sight of the lion he trembled with fear, especially when he called to mind Mary's words that she had never seen wild beasts in the desert. But guarding himself with the sign of the cross, the thought came to him that the power of the one lying there would protect him and keep him unharmed. Meanwhile the lion drew nearer to him, expressing affection by every movement.

Zosima said to the lion: "The Great One ordered that her body was to be buried. But I am old and have not the strength to dig the grave (for I have no spade and it would take too long to go and get one), so can you carry out the work with your claws? Then we can commit to the earth the mortal temple of the saint." While he was still speaking the lion with his front paws began to dig a hole deep enough to bury the body.

Again the elder washed the feet of the saint with his tears and calling on her to pray for all, covered the body with earth in the presence of the lion. It was as it had been, naked and uncovered by anything but the tattered cloak which had been given to her by Zosima and with which Mary had managed to cover part of her body. Then both departed. The lion went off into the depth of the desert like a lamb, while Zosima returned to the monastery glorifying and blessing Christ our Lord.

DAVID: Animals, especially a highly intelligent animal like a lion, is able to feel the thoughts and intent of people; what they feel in the saints, like Mary of Egypt, is the clear uncreated energy of God.

The Nature and Souls of Animals

RTE: Our own animals are so alive to us, that people often ask whether they have souls. What is your response?

DR. JOANNE: Animals have an essence that God gave them, their own level of spirituality. The Holy Fathers of the Church say that a human soul and an animal soul are different. Only man is made in the "image and likeness" of God. His soul is graced by the Holy Spirit. Also, a human soul has free will. Animal souls do not have free will, and instead are blessed with an



Sabba, the African lion, six months old, 1991.



Dr. Joanne Stefanatos and Seraphim Rose the Mountain Lion, 1995, Las Vegas.

unchangeable nature. God sustains animals through their natures and obedience to His Will. Although they have a different kind of soul than humans, they know God and they've never lost that connection.

Just as they can smell and hear things we cannot, animals also see another dimension that we usually don't see. Animals often know when something unseen is present and like children and saints, are closer to the angelic realm.

RTE: If animals are obedient to God, why are some of them vicious?

DR. JOANNE: Animals do not sin because they don't have free will, but they have been affected by the fall of man. Before the Fall, Adam knew the language and nature of all of the animals, birds, and reptiles, a knowledge hidden from us now. When Adam and Eve fell from grace, the whole creation fell with them. The animals did not want to submit to them. The sun and stars didn't want to shine, and the rivers and streams did not want to flow for them. Adam then asked God to preserve them from the beasts, so God commanded that the creation should remain in submission to fallen Adam and continue to serve him, so that when mankind finally becomes renewed and transfigured, the whole creation will be renewed together with him.

It was only after the Fall that mankind began to hunt and eat animals, and the animals to prey on one another. This is part of our fallen condition, but if an animal is vicious or destructive, it is not a sin, a decision of free will, but because they are starving, ill, afraid, or because they sense our fear or bad intent or confusion. Sometimes they are vicious because of training or conditions they've been subjected to by people who have hurt or abused them. The entire creation is waiting for us to return to our rightful kingship.

RTE: And how about those rare animals that attack humans, especially children, without provocation? Is this because they are also part of the fallen world and so their obedience to God isn't total and fallen instincts get the best of them? You mentioned that the smell of human young can drive them mad, and also that animals can be deceptive, jealous, and angry. And of course, they did kill St. Ignatius in the arena, so they were not restrained by his saintliness. Although to be fair, he did request that the Roman Christians not interfere, and prayed to be eaten.

DR. JOANNE: Yes, in the fallen world animals do sometimes attack man, but we must also remember that they sometimes save them, and there are stories throughout the ages of animals rescuing children and raising them in the wild.

When Adam and Eve fell, all of the animals fell with them. Animals are true to their nature after the Fall, and carnivores must hunt and kill to survive. The fallen nature of carnivores allows them to eat meat, and anything smaller than themselves is prey—yet, we also know of many instances where an animal will rescue the infant of another animal species; for example, a lion rescues an impala fawn, which by nature is prey, and raises it without hurting it.

RTE: Dr. Joanne, as a veterinarian you quite reasonably encourage people to be vegetarians, but what about St. Peter’s vision in Acts 10:9-16 where he sees all of the animals, reptiles, and birds of the earth, and three times hears a heavenly voice that says “Kill and eat”?

DR. JOANNE: In the Garden of Eden, no creature ate another; humans and animals were vegetarians. Even reptiles and carnivores ate herbs and trees, not flesh. When man fell, the animals fell with him. Then after the Flood, God said to Noah, “Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.” (Gen.9:3) So man and animals who were herbivores, now became carnivores.

God allowed man to eat meat because of the fallen condition of humanity, but Noah was commanded not to eat living animals or their blood. Now, the life blood of animals belonged to God, the flesh now to man. (Gen. 9:4) Man quickly adapted to eating meat, and although during their forty years of wandering with Moses in the desert, the Hebrews ate manna, not flesh, they still longed for the “fleshpots of Egypt.” Once they found the Promised Land they ate flesh again. (Gen. 16:3)

When Moses saw that the vice of sacrificing animals to idols was deeply ingrained in the people and that this evil could not be uprooted, he allowed them to continue sacrificing animals, but only to God. Hebrew law placed rules on how animals could be slaughtered and which could be eaten—which were clean and which were not.

Since these times, the eating of meat represents Fallen Man. “Everything that moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.” (Gen.10:3) “For every creature of God is good, and nothing be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving.” (Gen. 10:3) “No creature of God is unclean.” (Gen. 1:31)

So, we see that out of God’s loving kindness, in the Book of Acts, Peter was given a gift from God to appease his hunger. St. John Chrysostom says, “No





animal meat is unclean when it is received with thanksgiving. It is man's unthankful disposition to God that is unclean."

Communicating with Animals

RTE: Can we return to the idea of communicating with animals? Of course, most of us have had a relationship with a dog or cat, but communicating with wildlife seems quite different.

DR. JOANNE: All living things have consciousness and awareness and can communicate with us on some level. In simple terms, the awareness that we all exist as part of God's creation opens us to the spiritual connection beyond time and space that we generally call intuition, or as the Orthodox would say, it opens us to the *nous*, the deep intuitive understanding of the heart that is less a reasoned idea than simple knowing of a stable and ongoing truth.

Animals have never lost this awareness of God's glory in creation, and Metropolitan Kallistos Ware has a wonderfully humorous story about this from Mount Athos: There was once an elder praying in a monastery, who had just finished the Midnight Office and wanted to continue, but the frogs were singing very loudly. So, the elder asked the frogs to quiet down because he was about to begin Matins. The frogs replied, "We have already finished Matins and are commencing First Hour. Would you mind keeping quiet?"

In more physical terms, the communication of feeling between animals and humans exists in a magnetic energy field interaction that depends on our feelings and intent. When animals look into our eyes, they are looking for our intent. We broadcast this to other people as well as to animals, so, if we fear an animal he will pick up that emotion from us. In order to communicate with him, we have to control our thoughts and feelings, and learn to love. Animals understand these signals from people, from other animals and from nature itself. That's why they can predict a disaster, like an earthquake before it occurs, or the dogs who can detect cancer in a human before it is detectable by any tests.

Electroencephalograms (EEG's) have shown that these physical magnetic energy signals from the heart are much stronger than brain waves, and that electromagnetic field energy (EMF) radiates up to twelve feet. It can be read without placing electrodes upon the chest, so you can imagine how easy it is for animals to "read" us, even at a distance. And, if we are attentive and

aware, we can read them. Because the heart generates the strongest EMF of the body, this field becomes more coherent as we shift from a thinking to feeling mode and the information exchange is more potent. When you are with an animal just be quiet, talk to the animal from your heart, and try to hear what the animal wants to communicate. When you perceive an animal with your heart, it will respond.

In the field of quantum theory, Physicist David Bohm, a well-known researcher at UC Berkeley, Princeton, and finally Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of London and Fellow of the Royal Society of London, developed the concept of Implicate Order, in which all things, events, matter and consciousness are enfolded into a total wholeness and unity. Things of a similar nature resonate together and information in time and space is somehow merged into the present. This is why African lions are afraid of the color red, even if they are too young to have seen the Masai lion hunters who hunt them in red clothing. This is true even if the lions were born outside of Africa; it is the experience of their ancestors for generations.

RTE: In reading for this interview, I also found that there are physicists who believe that there may be a process whereby self-organizing biological systems inherit memories. This memory may not be stored in the brain like a video recorder, as we generally picture it, but the brain may act more like a television receiver, even tuning into influences from the past, an idea also mentioned by some contemporary Orthodox elders. According to this idea, biological inheritance need not only be coded in the genes, but each individual may somehow inherit a collective memory from past members of their species, and also contribute to the building of the collective memory that will affect members in the future. Also, they theorize that individuals may be subject to such transmissions from their own past, and that this provides the basis for individual memory and habits.

Although this has yet to be accepted by the wider scientific community, if it is true, it may explain how things like artistic or musical gifts, or a specific talent, can be passed down even if there is no physical communication between the generations. For example, I know an artist who, as a single mother, gave up her child for adoption at the moment of birth, and didn't see her again until the girl, now in her twenties, contacted her. Not only did the daughter have mannerisms very like her birth mother, but she drew and



David Hetzel with Jabu the Elephant, Botswana, 1995.



Dr. Joanne Stefanatos calling a bull elephant, 2012, Botswana.

painted in precisely the same style. I suppose the proponents of this theory would see it as another explanation of animal behavior, including why lions born out of Africa fear the red color worn by Masai warriors.

Your explanation that animals have a detailed knowledge of their surroundings, of humans and of other animals based on their heightened senses seems logical, and the theory of Implicate Order and perhaps even something that we might call “collective species memory” offers another piece. Can you offer us some examples of characteristics that we think of as human, arising in animal behavior?

DR. JOANNE: Yes. Animals in the fallen world demonstrate the positive emotions of love, justice, sympathy, and compassion, as well as the fallen emotions of fear, rage, and deception—for example, animals such as baboons, dogs, and ravens know how to distract each other to steal food.

Dame Daphne Sheldrick, a Kenyan animal rehabilitator, says that in the case of elephants, “each is a unique individual. They display envy, jealousy, throw tantrums and are fiercely competitive, and they can develop hang-ups which are reflected in behavior. They grieve deeply for lost loved ones, even shedding tears and suffering depression. They have a sense of compassion that projects beyond their own kind and extends to others in distress.” We know that elephants stand guard for several days over stillborn babies, with their heads and ears sunk low. Orphaned elephants who witnessed their mother’s death wake up screaming or run directly towards a lion. When an elephant finds elephant bones in the bush, it uses its front feet and trunk to touch the bones, to determine who the bones belong to. Elephants have been known to carry bones and bury them.

There are many other examples: Chimpanzees practice justice when they shun a cheating member from their group, while the African Meerkat risks its own life to stay with an injured or dying member of the family. Compassion also transcends species: In Tanzania’s Ruaha National Park, David and I once watched a leopard resting in a tree by the shore go into the river to save a squealing baby impala, whose parents had already crossed the river. The leopard pulled the baby out of the river, placed it safely on shore, and then walked slowly back into the bush to finish his nap.

A baby hippopotamus that was separated from its family during the tsunami of 2004 was taken to the Mt. Kenya Animal Orphanage where it was adopted by a 130-year-old tortoise, and they have been inseparable ever

since. We also saw a Bonobo monkey pick up an injured starling and try to put it back on its feet. When it couldn't fly, the Bonobo unfolded its wings and carefully tossed it into the air.

Also, you might remember the well-known incident that in 1996 a three-year-old boy fell into the primate enclosure at Chicago's Brookfield zoo. A gorilla named Binti Jua picked up the child and carried him to safety. She sat down on a log and rocked the boy on her lap, patting him a few times on his back before carrying him to the waiting zoo staff.

Even insects are capable of inter-species response. Some beekeepers speak to their bees and the bees are obedient, and hives of honey bees have even been known to swarm to their keepers' funeral.

Saints and Animals

RTE: What are a few of your favorite stories of animals and saints?

DR. JOANNE: First, I would say, the Life of St. Mary of Egypt, the desert recluse, who we mentioned earlier. She is the patron saint of our animal sanctuary.

Then I very much like the story of St. John Maximovitch of Shanghai and San Francisco. When Father Herman Podmoshensky once visited Blessed John, he noticed a white pigeon on his window sill. Blessed John had cared for this pigeon when it had an injured wing, and after the pigeon was healed, it would wait for Blessed John to come home every night. They would "converse" and the pigeon would pace back and forth, cooing as if he was memorizing all that he was being taught. One day, Fr. Herman attended a blessing of Holy Water, served by St. John in the courtyard of the church, and to everyone's amazement, the white pigeon soared over the basin of holy water as they were singing, "When Thou, O Lord, was baptized in the Jordan." Father Herman said the sight was unforgettable. On the day Archbishop John died in another city, the white pigeon fluttered frantically in agony on the windowsill, dying himself a short time after. Such love and devotion.

I also love the story of Prophet Elijah and the Raven, especially since David and I climbed Mount Sinai and spent a hot afternoon in St. Elijah's cave where he spoke to God while he was in exile. According to local tradition, he had fled the vengeance of Queen Jezebel and taken refuge in the Sinai desert at Wadi Cherith, where God promised to provide him with water and the

ravens fed him twice daily. This went on for many years, until finally he was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. In the Prophet Elijah was restored the original glory of man, and his likeness to God in his compassion and mercy to the animal kingdom.

Another great saint is Placidus or Eustachius, a general of Rome, who while hunting in the forest came upon a magnificent stag. Between its beautiful branching horns was a dazzling light, and in the midst of that splendor, an image of the Crucifixion. He heard a voice saying: "Placidus, why dost thou follow Me? I have taken this form to speak to thee; I am the Christ Whom you serve without knowing. The just man, whom I recognize by his works, must not serve devils and false gods, who cannot give life or reward." Placidus asked, "Who is this talking to me"... "I am Jesus Christ, Who created heaven and earth out of nothing. Go Placidus and seek the chief pastor of the Christians and be baptized." Placidus was called back to battle, and later in life he and his family were condemned to death for being Christians, and taken to the arena where two lions and four bears were loosed to devour them. However, the animals would not touch the martyrs: the lion, the King of Beasts, placed his head under Placidus' foot, voluntarily crouching down to the martyr in reverence; the bears also licked the feet of the martyrs. Finally, they were thrown into a fiery bronze bull, where they received their crowns.

I also love the Martyr Mamas, who cared for animals as a young boy in the mountains, and after his arrest as a Christian was fed by a dove in prison. When he was condemned and thrown to wild beasts in the arena, a hungry she-bear approached the saint and, bowing down to him, laid at his feet embracing them. His torturers then released a leopard who fell on his neck, kissed his face and wiped the sweat off his brow. After the leopard, a lion sprang into the arena and ran towards the saint, speaking to Mamas in a human voice, "Thou art my shepherd who tended me on the mountain." The lion then leaped into the crowd and mangled many of the onlookers who had come to see the death of the saint. Finally, Mamas was stoned by the crowd and gave up his soul for the glory of God. He is considered the patron saint of animals.

Finally, there is St. Ignatius of Antioch, whom we also mentioned earlier. He was the child whom Jesus held before His disciples as a pattern of humility. St. Ignatius prayed with all his heart that God would allow him to be eaten by the lions in the arena, and God did so, as a witness to the Romans. His last words were, "May I have joy of Thy wild beasts!" St. Igna-

tius purified with his own blood, the city which had been defiled by the blood of idols.

On Safari in Africa

RTE: Thank you. To end this wonderful interview, will you tell us some of your own favorite experiences of communicating with animals in the wild?

DR. JOANNE: I will tell you three stories. The first was when we were on safari in Africa. It was a beautiful sunny day and my husband and I were in a jeep with our driver-guide. In the distance I saw a very large bull elephant, so I spoke to him heart to heart, in silence, and told him that I was sorry that he was all by himself, but that we had come from far away to see him and he should remember that God is watching over him. I asked him if he would please come closer so we could see him, and immediately he turned and came straight towards us. As he came closer, our driver became frightened and wanted to leave. I told him, "No, we have asked the elephant to come over to us." The driver was startled at this, so I continued talking to the elephant out loud so that the driver could hear me. The elephant came within just a few feet and we had an amazing connection with him. I asked him if he would turn his head so that I could take a few pictures of his beautiful eye. He immediately turned his head sideways. I told him that I was sorry we had to leave but that I would remember him and pray that God send him a mate. As we left the driver said, "I've never, ever, seen anything like that before."

The second story was from another safari in Botswana, where we were in a jeep with a young couple who very much wanted to see a leopard. As we were driving around in the bush, our driver got a call that a leopard had been sighted climbing down from a tree about twenty minutes away. The jeep took off, but as we made a hairpin turn to cross a bridge over crocodile-infested waters, the driver suddenly put on his brakes to avoid hitting a large bull elephant watering at the foot of the bridge.

Dust was flying and the startled elephant trumpeted loudly and charged our vehicle, running towards us at full gait. It was impossible to back up quickly enough, so I prayed as hard as I could and told him that we hadn't meant to scare him, but we'd been going fast so that we could see the leopard. I told him, "Please don't hurt us, we love you." In a cloud of dust the elephant pulled up inches from our jeep, and as the dust settled I could see him moving his trunk towards us, to find the person who was talking to him.

The young couple were almost fainting with fear. He found me and sniffed me without touching me, and I thanked him for his patience with us, and asked him to let us go so that we could find the leopard. He stepped aside and we left. I explained to the couple that you have to talk to an animal for it to know your intent, and that animals are intelligent. By the way, we were in time for the leopard.

The last story is our glorious experience of trekking to see the Mountain Gorillas in Uganda. I had sent thoughts and wishes their way for a month before David and I went to Africa, and when we got to the base of the mountains we had to spend 24 hours acclimatizing to the altitude before the climb. As I stood outside the guest house, I told the gorillas that we had come from across the world and asked them to show themselves. There were six people in our group, and each person is only given one permit, and that permit is good for a single day, but the guides told us that twice that week they hadn't found the gorillas after trekking for the whole day. People can travel immense distances and never get a glimpse of them.

The next morning the guides cut bamboo walking sticks for us and set a strenuous pace straight up the mountainside. We climbed along animal trails in the deep brush, and after a couple of hours I asked the gorillas to please show themselves as soon as they could. In a flash, we heard a powerful swoosh in the bamboo trees over our heads and everyone froze in their tracks. It was a large silverback male checking us out. I thanked him for showing himself and asked if we could see his family. He kept his eyes on us and jumped down into a clearing on the path ahead, where he was joined by his troop of twelve family members. A large female sat next to him and the others all huddled close together. We were so happy to see them.

We were allowed to stay for an hour, and although the gorillas edged close to us and seemed to want to approach, we'd been asked to stay twenty feet away for their protection, so we had to keep backing up. I could sense the gorillas' harrowing lives, but I told them that there are many people in the world who would love to see them and are praying for them, and that we were here for them as well. No sooner did I say this than the female pulled a newborn baby, two days old, out from under her arm and held it up for us to see. We were so grateful for such a gift, and when the hour was up, we all flew back down the mountain full of joy. The guides said that this was the first time that the gorillas had ever wanted to come closer, and didn't seem to want the people to leave.

RTE: Thank you, Dr. Joanne. Would you like to say something in closing?

DR. JOANNE: The only way we can retake our rightful place as stewards of the animal kingdom is to return to God ourselves. We begin by giving glory and thanks to Him for His Creation; that is, we don't adore the creation, we adore the Creator. When, in Christ, we cleanse our thoughts, our feelings, will, and actions, we begin to sense our part in creation intuitively—as the Church Fathers tell us, through the *nous*, the noetic energy that functions in the heart of every healthy person. When God's grace reveals the inner essence of animals, you experience the kingdom as God planned it. When you connect with animals, heart to heart, mind to mind, it is God's grace that connects you. Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough, and the entire animal world is waiting for the transformation and return of mankind. ✱

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