

When I see Heaven and earth as my own garden,  
I live that moment outside the universe.  
-Zen poem

Dear Friends,

Spring 2004

It was the third Sunday of the month, our brunch meal, and I was greeting people and giving out numbers at the gate. Martins serves ten meals a week, one being our Sunday brunch which goes from 9:00 to 10:30AM. I had given out over 600 numbers and the whole place was packed with people both inside our dining room and in the garden and courtyard. Just as I had stopped giving out numbers a man came running in and pleaded with me, in Spanish, "Help! This bird is very sick and dying!" The man then placed a hummingbird in the palm of my hand. It had a large drop of blood under its tiny throat and was barely breathing.

"What's going on?" Guests began asking.

"It's a sick hummingbird."

The word spread fast around the garden. We carried the hummingbird over to our water fountain. I say "we" because even though it was I who held the tiny creature in my hand everyone's attention was riveted on it. Someone fetched a portion control cup in which we serve butter at the holidays and put some water in it. We watched the bird's tongue come out, like a piece of very translucent thread, and take a few sips of the water. Following each sip it took one or two breaths.

We: the guests, the bird and I, walked over to the bench in front of our Memorial tree and sat down. As we stared at this wonder in my hand, not believing how tiny, beautiful and perfect it was. Every person in our garden, at that moment, seemed to be beaming Love into this little being. You could hear not so much the actual words but the tone in each person's voice, encouraging, gentle, loving. Time stood still and all of us got to experience both the miracle of life and the tragedy of possible untimely death. It seemed also that all of us humans had come together instinctively to protect that which is so much more vulnerable than ourselves.

The bird took a few more sips of water and lay very, very still. I don't know if we were praying or pleading with the Great Creator to spare its life but all of a sudden it came awake and in less than an instant flew straight up and away.

A cheer went up. We hugged each other, laughed, shed a few tears and cried out, "Wow! Did you see THAT!" Then we patted each other on the back as if we were all proud parents who had watched their child grow, thrive and venture out on its own.

Spring is the season of rebirth and resurrection. What we were sure in the darkness of winter was dead has brought forth buds and is bursting with life. The seeds we thought had washed away years ago bloom; not, perhaps in the place we had planted, but they bloom, nonetheless. The well of faith in our hearts that sometimes seems to dry up floods back deeper and more abundant.

In each of our souls grows a wisdom and truth that nothing can kill. At Martins, day after day, year after year, we know Love connects and heals us. On that wondrous Sunday a tiny messenger brought us all together as one and made that experience a reality.

Thank you for all your support.

Blessings of love,

Barbara Collier  
For the Martin de Porres Community

