

HOUSTON VISITING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSE SERVICE, INC.

August 2022

Persistence Personified: The Saga of Marcus the Mariposa

(Part 1 of 3)

Students of Christian Science are grateful for both quick healings and slow healings. Those that take a while are filled with teaching moments, testing times, and steadily growing trust in God's love for His children.

Recently I recalled one such healing. A neighbor had asked me to let the painters out of her house on a late November evening. As I sat in the dark on her patio step waiting for them to finish cleaning up, I noticed a tiny form huddled on the cement at my feet. Bending down, I saw the outline of a monarch butterfly with wings closed. He wasn't moving. All around him were large pots my neighbor had filled with milkweed—a monarch's favorite food. Without thinking twice, I gently scooped his lifeless body into my gloved hands and brought him home to recover from the cold night air.

Within a few minutes of being indoors, the monarch spread his wings and flapped them weakly. He made repeated attempts to fly but couldn't lift off. At that moment I realized he required not simply physical warmth but Christian Science treatment.

In the coming days and weeks, I learned from nature-loving friends, from butterfly websites and from hands-on experience how to care for the daily needs of this monarch, whose migrating friends had by now reached their winter destination in Mexico.



Marcus drinks sugar water from the lid of a Limoges dish.

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I also became well acquainted with verses in the King James Bible, passages in *Science and Health*, and lines in the *Christian Science Hymnal* that speak of wings, flight, rising, upward, Spiritward, soaring, and the like.

Every day he practiced flying from my index finger—his launch pad—to a piece of furniture or a silk plant or the bed quilt or the carpeted floor, all of which served as landing pads. He rested after each attempt. But his spirits never flagged. He didn't seem to think of these aborted sessions as failures. Nor did I. Rather, they were opportunities for me to keep knowing, and for him to keep proving, that he could do what he was meant to do: fly. In between his periods of exercise, he took hours-long—even days-long—naps. (I later learned that he was undergoing his own north-of-the-border hibernation, in spurts.)

One reason my memories of Marcus (named after my dad) the Mariposa (butterfly in Spanish) are vivid is that I kept a diary of his progress. Later I rewrote all the entries in essay form. A few selections follow:

Day #2: Tuesday, November 29, 2011

The next morning, while letting my neighbor's painters back into her house, I picked a variety of butterfly-friendly flowers from the pots on her porch. Back at my house, I put them in a container of water and placed both the container and Marcus in a large, transparent, lidless box, along with a kerchief for coziness, a napkin for after-meal cleanup, and a fake daisy for fun.

A friend whose advice I solicited emailed me instructions on making butterfly meals. I heated the mixture (one part sugar, four parts water) in my microwave. Marcus drank thirstily that evening. I learned how a butterfly unfurls his thin nose/mouth—his proboscis—to drink.

Afterwards, Marcus tried to fly a bit. He kept falling to the carpet. Then he'd scramble onto my finger and try again. He was persistence personified.



Marcus drinks sugar water from the holes punched in an apple slice.

Day #7: Sunday, December 4

A Danish hymn we sang in church today ends with, "The whole creation owns Thy power" (130:2). Yes, Marcus the Mariposa owns God's power. His resilience,

strength, endurance, persistence, patience, balance, vitality, motivation, flexibility, and joy come from our perfect Father-Mother, in whose image the real man—including all right ideas we call “creatures”—are not only “very good,” but, in fact, *perfect* (see James 1:4, 17.)

Day #9: Tuesday, December 6

At 7:00 AM, I opened my hymnal at random and found this beautiful, suitable sentiment by William Cowper: “Here we may prove the power of prayer / To strengthen faith and sweeten care; / To teach our faint desires to rise, / And bring all heaven before our eyes” (227:3).

We’ll stop our story here and pick up next month. You already know it has a happy ending—or we wouldn’t be telling this tale. But just *how* Marcus was healed—and what happened afterwards—are the spiritually uplifting details that will be revealed in the September and October issues of “Good News.”

Before signing off, though, let’s consider how the patience and persistence expressed by Marcus and his caregiver are reminiscent of the loving, loyal care our Houston Visiting Christian Science *Journal*-listed nurse, Susie Petersen, gives to her clients. When healing isn’t immediate, Susie faithfully shows up, day after day. She isn’t tempted to give up or become frustrated by seemingly slow progress. Instead, she joyously affirms the truth that each dear one she visits is *already* well in God’s eyes.

“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4).

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