

# **The Power of Prayer**

## **Regaining Faith**

### **Believing in Miracles**

a personal testimony



My name is Gary Sutton and I've been a member of Blessed Sacrament Parish since 1975. At one time I taught 4th grade CCD (1984-1986). I have a powerful story to tell. I hope it lifts your spirit and touches your life.

On December 5, 2012, my life began to change forever. I was a 60 year old Catholic and was losing my faith. I have had allergies to dairy and eggs for over twenty years. I was on disability due to several stomach, back problems and blacking out. On this day I got up to go to the bathroom and my wife's two dogs were out. They attacked me, bit me over 150 times, knocking me down, hurting my back. I managed to crawl to safety. At this time I believe I lost all faith in the Lord.

I went to CAMC-General. I was admitted and stitched. The next day my foot was infected and they operated in the middle of the night. I was lucky. The doctor said it could have been worse. I could have lost my foot if I didn't get to safety when I did. To me, it was a miracle and I began to regain faith.

Also, I had a swallowing problem that began in December 2011. I could not swallow food. It not only wouldn't go down, I choked on it. I weighed 288 pounds on December 5, 2012 and at this point I was down to 170. A couple of days later I was ready for discharge. I was weak and unable to walk or put any weight on my foot, so I was sent to a nursing home and it was a terrible experience.

I told the people at the nursing home about my swallowing problem. They ignored it. A substitute speech therapist said I swallowed well. Like so many doctors, including specialists, the therapist was wrong. I was diagnosed with ulcers, a hernia and sinus problems. They told me it was mucous. However, they were all wrong.

In January 2013, I was taking therapy, walking in the hall with a therapist. The nurse stopped me to give me medicine. I choked like always. It was getting worse. The therapist rushed me back to the therapy room where a speech therapist saw me and later that day she watched me attempt to eat. She said I needed a swallowing test. She ordered one. About a week later in the middle of January 2013 I took the test. The speech therapist and the radiologist who gave the test stopped it immediately, and said I had a very large spur on my hyoid bone in my throat that kept me from swallowing properly. Food would go into my lungs and I would aspirate. I was told to stop eating by mouth. I got an appointment with an ENT doctor. In the meantime, my food was pureed and was given thick drinks which I discovered was the worst thing to do.

I also had food allergies related to eggs, gluten and dairy products. They did not want to research tube feedings to see if there was one I could take. It took about ten days to schedule an appointment in early February with Dr. Beasley, an ENT specialist. At this point, I weighed about 143. The choking was getting worse. Food by mouth would come out my nose and I could not catch my breath. Nurses would ignore it. One day when I was choking, the nursing home doctor was visiting my roommate. He hurried up, washed his hands and left the room fast. Not one time did he discuss a feeding tube with me.

Dr. Beasley said the spur I had was huge and he would have to operate, going through the neck. I would be hospitalized a couple of days. The date was set for February 21, 2013 at Thomas Memorial and at that time I was given a feeding tube. In the meantime, the home kept trying to feed me and I got weaker and weaker. Then, a week before surgery I came down with the flu and did not eat for about four days. I did have some thickened Gatorade. In the meantime my chest was hurting and they would not get me an x-ray (which would have shown that food was going into my lungs). I was dehydrated and they would not give me an IV for hydration. I was miserable, very weak and weighed only 123 pounds.

Although I was still a little sick and very weak they sent me to have the surgery. I remember waking up in the recovery room, attempting to eat a little and I could not catch my breath. Dr. Beasley rushed me to ICU. That is the last thing I remember about that part of my journey. Now I rely on doctors, friends and family telling me what happened at this point. I had aspirating pneumonia and was completely dehydrated. It was the worst case the doctors had ever seen. I was very sick, very weak. My brother Dennis, my medical power of attorney, agreed to my being put on a ventilator. After nine days I was taken off and then put back on for five more days. On several occasions the doctors told my brother I had only a few minutes to

live. They said I was worse than critical. Finally, they told my brother to start thinking about sending me to hospice. However, I was not ready. My brother said not yet. Sometime during those last five days, still not responding to treatment, on my fifth antibiotic, nothing was working.

In March of 2013, the people at Blessed Sacrament brought me a prayer blanket. They put it on my legs with the doctor's OK and soon I was on my way to recovery. The doctors told me later that it was a miracle because they felt that I had had no chance of surviving. To me it was a true miracle and showed the power of prayer. By this time the people of Blessed Sacrament and others, many I did not know, were praying for me.



I still could not walk, talk, move from side to side or eat, and I did not know anything. After a couple of days in PCU, they moved me to Select Care at St. Francis.

On the first day there the therapist came to my room. I could not stand or even get up. On the second day I improved and I could talk some. After a few days I was able to walk ten feet before getting weak, with my heart beating fast and oxygen level dropping. I was on oxygen and the tracheotomy was still in. An x-ray showed that I still had pneumonia. Eventually I got up to walking about 50 feet with a walker and help. Then my 30 days were up and it was time to leave. They had taken the tracheotomy out but I still was on oxygen. I told them I would not go back to the terrible nursing home where I had been and so I was moved to Putnam Center in Teays Valley, where I continue to be. I couldn't get out of bed by myself. They started me in therapy including speech therapy to work on swallowing. They scheduled a swallowing test. I was weak. I still could not swallow but I never lost sight of prayers. The fact is I was live. God, I believed, had a reason and a plan for me. In a few weeks at the end of April I had a major setback. I had pneumonia and went back into the hospital. I weighed 112 on February 2013. I weighed 121 in April 2013 however I would lose weight every time I was hospitalized.

There were several times I got infections and received antibiotics, which made it seem like I was on antibiotics on a regular basis. It was very easy for me to get infections. I went to several specialists to gain weight. Finally after many trips to the doctor and about 40 days later, one called and started me on a medicine that contained FAT, four times a day. It worked and in September 2014 I began to gain weight.

My trust in the Lord is strong – very strong now. The biggest problem was getting a tube feeding food that did not have eggs or wheat or dairy. That is the only food I can eat and I am still using the same food. I developed other problems during 2014. I could not use either hand and I went to the doctor. He said it was my nerves. They were not working right and they were not protected by muscles and fat. I had none. I handled it well if it was the will of God. I do believe that some time before that, when I first came to Putnam Center, I started going to activities, doing crafts, making jewelry, pot holders, painting, doing crafts, drawing. I found out I was good and made over 100 necklaces and potholders. Some I give away, some I sell, I still make jewelry when my hands are doing well. I paint some. I went to a lot of religious meetings of all denominations. During 2013 and in the first half of 2014 I took a swallowing test five times, failing each time. I continued to pray and other people at Blessed Sacrament prayed for me that someday I would eat.

From December 5 2012 I received miracles and I ask for one more and I will get it. Although the doctors said I will probably not eat but I won't believe that. I am in God's hands. When I first was put in Putnam Center there was scripture class. I went. I was very weak, could barely talk, spit up a lot of mucous. This meeting was on prayers/miracles. So out of nowhere the Lord told me to give testimony. Most people in the room could not hear well; however, everyone listened. You could hear a drop of a pin. They listened intently. Everyone in that room was touched by my story. Many said I helped them regain their hopes, happiness and spirit. There were about 25 people in the room. I also was elected to the Resident Council. I wrote the by-laws for the Council. Staff and residents like me very much. They said I touched their lives.

At this time I would like to share a poem written by a nine year old girl (daughter of a nurse who visits me).

I wanted to brighten Gary's day  
by going to see him at Christmas time  
and getting him something he always wanted.  
That should brighten his day.  
He is very special to me.  
I want to brighten his day because he's kind  
and one of the best things that happened to me.

This poem was very touching and uplifting for me. I believe God sent me on this up/down journey long journey so I could touch the lives of everyone I come in contact with and I do.

As I write this on January 26, 2015 I am doing well. A couple of months ago I had a blood clot in my leg. January 15, 2015, I had all my teeth taken out. The doctors said over two years ago that was needed, however they hesitated because they could not get medical clearance. However, on the day of surgery God was with me and everything went fine. My mouth is sore but getting better. I now weigh 132 pounds, but still have pain in my back and arms. I walk with a walker but not too far. I still receive oxygen. I do some crafts and am still vice president of the Resident Council. I decorated my room with crosses and images of angels. They lift me up. I still cannot swallow but someday I will with the help of your continued prayers. I am a firm believer in miracles. Maybe I will be able to go home soon. In the meantime, I continue to change the lives of people here.

Now I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Blessed Sacrament for their prayers, and especially for the prayer blanket, a very powerful spirit-filled blanket which I will always cherish. I am grateful to Father John for his visits, prayers and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Thanks to Patricia O'Reilly I receive communion through the feeding tube weekly and this means a lot to me. I also appreciate John Lordan, who, every Saturday night at Mass, stands and asks for your prayers for me. He sometimes visits me with Patricia.

For another miracle sometime in the future I would like to be able to eat. The last time I tried to eat anything by mouth was the evening of February 20, 2013. It was pureed and thickened and I could not swallow it. Can you imagine no hot dogs, nor hamburger, nor pizza? No cake at parties or socials? No soft drinks or lemonade, not even on a warm summer day? No going out on holidays or special occasions for almost two years? I have never felt sorrow for myself and I have never blamed God. In fact, I have gained in faith. I am always positive, happy and trust in God. I believe he has a reason for all this. And, although the doctors say different, when I fulfill the reason, whatever it is, I believe I will be able to eat again, even though I have had numerous setbacks (pneumonia and eight infections, five hospital stays (two in ICU), a couple in PCU).

When I lost movement of my hands for days at a time, I stayed positive. When I was told it would be long time before I would be able to walk, I stayed positive and then in a couple of weeks I was walking some with the aid of a walker. Why am I happy and positive? Because I trust in God. I believe all things are possible if you believe. The joy of the Lord is my strength. I am in God's hands. I will eat when

it is time. I also thank God for giving me the strength to endure the last couple of years. Without faith and God's help I would not have been able to endure this. I eat the same food every day through a tube in my stomach. I eat six times a day. I never taste anything. I never feel hungry. I never feel full. Instead, I am grateful that I am gaining strength and weight and doing well.

Please continue to pray for me that someday I will be able to eat a sweet potato or a Chinese buffet. My God bless you and be with you always. And remember, miracles do happen.

I want to add a special thanks to my wife Sherry, my brother Dennis, my aunt Stella, my cousin Theresa, a friend Ramona and my mother-in-law. Thanks. This is my story. I hope it touches you, gives you a boost spiritually. Please continue to pray and sometime soon I will eat. May God be with you now and always! Again, thanks for praying and proving to me that prayers are powerful.