

Stories of Faith

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If you want to inspire others with your religious experiences, please send us a story of your faith.

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Stories of Faith

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My Small Miracles #1

by Linda Caragos

I believe in miracles and I know they will keep on coming if I keep on believing that with God, there are no coincidences... only miracles.

I trace my family lineage with the Neris and Marforis of Cagayan de Oro and the Picardals of Iligan. I was born Rosalinda Marfori Picardal, but I grew up in bucolic barrio Samburon, under the municipality of Linamon, Lanao del Norte.

When I was a little girl, the moros or bandidos would attack our barrio about three times a year. Our home was a virtual armory with high powered firearms. We had a foxhole under the house with sandbags surrounding it, the trapdoor and stairway of which was located in my room. It was because of these sporadic attacks that we needed a divine protector for our Christian barrio, so my papa built a chapel and enthroned the Sacred Heart. I was only 6, going grade 2. That was June and the first fiesta novena was held the evening. The altar was not finished on the time so innovative mama put the 3 feet statue on a wooded pedestal for plants which she covered with her hand embroidered and crocheted tablecloth.

After the prayers, we went home and then the earth shook. All the cabinets and aparadors fell, our radio in the kitchen reached the lanai. We rushed out of the house, I could feel the earth move like waves and I felt dizzy. My father was alerted by his tenants that there was a very big fissure or crack on the earth near the Chapel. We rushed to the place fearing the worst.

The confessional, the carosa, the benches and all the brass florerias were down but lo and behold, the Sacred Heart still stood and it was not even nailed to the pedestal. At a very tender age, I was blessed to experience my first encounter with the Lord and His wondrous miracle. The whole scenario stuck vividly in my young mind as I could not comprehend the sudden mass hysteria and delirium of people praying, crying, and singing all at the same time, so I cried in fear.

We learned later that Hibok-hibok volcano erupted and the quake registered almost 7 in the Richter scale. This eruption created a tsunami around lake Lanao in Marawi which killed more than a thousand people. After the chapel was built, never again did the Muslim bandits harass our Christian barrio.

Four years later, when I was ten, our family transferred to Iligan City. Papa rented the Maria Christina Hotel building and he became a hotelier, restaurateur, and grocery owner, all rolled into one.

The Sacred Heart statue was sent to us to be repainted. He was going to bring it back to the barrio when the big Iligan fire occurred. The conflagration gutted commercial buildings in about 14 blocks. As Mama hurriedly unfolded blankets to put our belongings and dropped these from the window to our waiting trucks below, si Papa nga bilib na bilib in the divine intervention of the Sacred Heart brought out the statue

with the help of the hotel boys to face the raging inferno and according to him, every time he did this, the wind changed its direction. In the end, only the 3-storey Hotel was left standing in our block, all others, in front, sides, and back, were burned down.

According the Hebrews, *"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we don't see.;* to the Canaanite or Syrophnecian woman, Jesus said, "Woman, great is your faith.", to the blind man, the beggar, and Bartimaeus, *"Go, your faith has saved you."* It was strong faith, this living faith that I saw in my Papa. He believed in miracles and God did not fail him. After the fire, he would tease my Mom who panicked with, "Where is your faith, oh you of little faith and blesses are those who do not see yet believed."

My Small Miracles #2

by Linda Caragos

In 1979, papa who turned 60 years old made Cagayan his place of retirement. His factory workers called a strike and he went bankrupt. Then one day, after a round of golf with Doring, he complained of tonsillitis, which was later diagnosed by a throat specialist as cancer of the tonsils. That was in May. The metastasis was very rapid. In just a month, big lumps appeared on his right neck.

He was bombarded with chemotherapy and radiation at St. Luke's Hospital in Manila. My sister, Tess, an international purser with PAL at that time, and another sister, Vicky (who is now in Canada), took care of him and Mama then. In June, he came to me and asked me to accompany him to Samburon for the Sacred Heart fiesta,

which he never missed.

I knew deep in my heart that he wanted another miracle in his life so I acquiesced and went with him. When we reached the chapel, we immediately knelt down and looked imploringly at the statue to ask for a cure but we were dumbfounded, so we just held each others' hand and cried because the statue had a gaping hole on its right neck as if personifying his ailment.

Papa, who used to worry and complain about his predicament, became meek as a lamb being led to slaughter, a changed person after that. His metanoia or change of heart toward his maranatha or as the Lord come, was so evident, in fact, so striking. He felt sure that God was calling him to his bosom so he let go and let God and placed his entire being and secure refuge in the Lord. He told me, "Gitawag na ko niya" and he was at peace. He died on August 12 at Lourdes Hospital in Manila, after one month in ICU and 4 months after his disease was diagnosed. In the end, he even welcomed death and where God put a period, we never asked why. We were too resigned.

I got Mama to live with me. Mama became a member of Mary's Rosary Makers and introduced our whole family to this craft. One of her cherished wishes was to die on an Easter Sunday so that she would go straight to heaven with the resurrected Christ. Twenty-one years ago, while we were praying the family evening rosary, she had a massive heart attack. She was in the ICU of Medical Center for 15 days until she succumbed on Easter Sunday. God didn't come to take away her sufferings, He did not even come to explain it. He came to fill it with His loving presence.

• My Small Miracles #3

by Linda Caragos

Another time, while my only son was being operated on for a cyst which the doctor suspected to be malignant, my husband and I took refuge in the sanctuary of the Carmelite church, as he was a devotee of the Holy Child of Prague or Santo Niño. As we were pouring and crying out our miseries before Him on bended knees, the steel door on our right side made a loud clanging noise. It might have been blown by the wind but what was astonishing was that our attention became focused on the word PUSH on the door, but the letter H was folded and we read PUS. Then our fears were allayed. The cyst formed due to PUS as he had UTI. And that was what the Doctor said when he came out from the operating room. It was just PUS. Where logic ends, faith begins.

I now look at these little miracles to punctuate my humdrum existence. Actually, I still have so many small miracles in my life waiting to be told and I know they will keep coming if I keep on trusting in God's Divine providence.

How I understand the prayer of Jabez "Lord, bless us abundantly and increase our Christian responsibilities towards our brothers and sisters. Teach us to be more committed, more generous, more compassionate, and more tolerant to others mistakes. Put Your hand over us and guide and lead us to the path of righteousness and holiness and as You bless us, make us a blessing for others, and as You protect us, protect us from harming others. Amen!"

• A Senior's Monologue

By Linda Caragos



Was it only yesterday, when I hopscotched in a children's game, ran the long winding staircase, and climbed our backyard fruit trees? Why is it that today! I feel weak? I can not even execute a decent jump. Sometimes, I go down the stairs one step at a time, holding on for dear life, in the baluster or the railing, how much more climb a tree?

I used to call dad and mom's friends titos and titas ; now friends' children call me tita, in turn, and worse, their children's children call me Lola. I am also missing some of my friends, my list is getting shorter. I have reached the sixties, but, my mind is young and remembers all the yesterdays. I see a little graying, a line or two in my face which was not there before. Am I still on denial stage? When did I grow old? Has time passed me by?

I recall my wedding day, when my strong and handsome groom held my hand and asked me to climb the hill together with him. Somehow, as we were going downhill, I found myself all alone. We have had such happy years of living together, two years short of our golden , contented with what the world could give us. We toured the four continents ; we brought the children along in some of our trips. Now, I see the children are all grown up, with children of their own. When did these all happen? Time flew so fast. I marvel at my growing apos,

some of whom are lovely young ladies, my replicas; they will take my place , in the world someday, when I am gone. Except for one child, soon my nest will be empty, and I will be all alone again, on my own. I will be by myself, wondering , waiting, expecting if they will come and visit me. It is hard to be alone, so lonely to go through life solo. Sometimes, I would think that things will never be the same again, that the happy days are forever lost and won't come back. I'm a goner.

There were things in the past that I should not have done and things that I ought to have . done, but can't do anymore. Why did I not do it when I still could? The world is rapidly changing technologically and there is so much I don't understand anymore. I have now a dual citizenship, by becoming a senior citizen. I am semi retired. My sleep habit has changed; an owl at night, and sleeps in the daytime, in my chair, while watching television, reading a book or face booking. My gadgets keep me company but I am charging, every so often, so my children can check on me anytime.

I don't mind being alone, as I got happy dreams while wide awake; all the happy memories of yore entertain me. The children have their families to attend to. I can not be their priority. I have to fight the loneliness, I should not impose on them. My savings, my pension will see me through. No worry there. I visit my husband, I see a vacant place in the grass, where I will be put to rest. All is ready, except me.

A time will come and I shall have come full circle, I am not afraid as I have come to realize that a Supreme Being has always been sustaining me all along, my Rock of Refuge. My living faith in His promise that there can still be an eternal bliss, is what makes me strong and keeps me going.....until then , in My Lord's own time, I shall patiently wait.

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• The Red Mass

By Mari Justin Akut

Approximately 1,500 people attended the grand Red mass offered for the Holy Spirit at Santuario Eucharistico last July 4, 2014. All students of Liceo de Cagayan University from primary to tertiary, teachers, parents and even the Board of Directors, herself, Madam Rafaelita Golez. All these people present for one goal - to worship the Holy Spirit. To give thanks and resent. The celebration is a reminder for all Liceans and citizens to always put God on the center of everything we do.