

In God's Way and in God's Time

What seems like a lifetime ago, I prayed with my wife, Teresa, in a small church in Owlsmoor, Nr Camberley, Surrey. This tiny church was packed with parishioners who knew what we needed – a miracle! They and the vicar, the Rev Geoff Peace, had only known us for a couple of months but the warmth in their welcome had been absolute.

My wife, my daughter, my mother and I had moved from Northern Ireland, where I had been working, and shortly after our arrival Teresa began to have violent headaches. Our worst fears were confirmed and she was diagnosed with a brain tumour and the prognosis was not good – she had months to live. As we prayed I simply asked for God's love and help – every time I tried to pray that I wanted Teresa to live I kept getting a voice saying "why do you ask me for this? Have I not already told you that, 'he that believeth in me - though he were dead, yet shall he live?'" After the service, Geoff came to me and said, "I feel something very special happened today Colin – I felt a great move of God here." - I confessed that I did not believe that the miracle that they had been praying for would happen – if I could not ask for it how could they? He smiled and said, "What made you think that I was asking for Teresa to live now? I know the miracle is that you will have great strength; that you will look back on this moment and see that all miracles happen in God's way and in God's time!"

The sad event occurred some six months later. The only request Teresa had ever made of me during her illness was that- 'when it happens I want you to be there'. I told her that I could not promise that - since we could not possibly know 'the hour' but that if it was God's wish then I would hold her as she passed into heaven. The day it happened - I was held in the bedroom by something and just could not leave as I had done on many occasions before. Teresa wish was granted - I held her in my arms as she died. After the dust had settled; my company, at my request, moved me to Norfolk where I started to re-build my life and try to give my little girl a loving home. Paramount to the success of that process was the fact that my mother, then aged 67, took on the upkeep of a large house and a lively 2¹/₂ year old girl.

The years passed, several moves took place and mum continued to look after us both through the good and, very rarely, the bad. Her love, care and compassion for us never faltered. It seemed in Louisa-Claire, my mother had the daughter she had always wanted and worked endlessly to give us both a wonderful home. My daughter grew up and went to university. I re-met an old school friend, my lovely Janice, and we married six years ago. With Janice's wonderful help and support we now looked after 'Granny Smith. Mum so thoroughly enjoyed the new extended family of my fantastic step-children, Nicki and Mark. Throughout her life, but especially in the last few years, there were to be many minor miracles for my mother; full recovery from major seizures; restored eyesight to her one good eye after a cataract operation to name but just two. Her greatest wish, however, was whenever the time came that she could be allowed to die at home. On her last emergency visit to hospital we could never have believed that she would ever return. Return she did - with a great big smile on her face and amazement on ours!

Granny Smith passed away on the 12 August this year aged 91, holding my hand - in her bedroom that she loved so much. As she lay in her room we lit a candle and as we carried it in, the words, 'he that believeth in me - though he were dead, yet shall he live!' came almost automatically out of my mouth and I knew again what, with Geoff's help, I had always really known – miracles do happen but

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