

I believe my husband received a miracle. Our prayers were answered and Saint Camilla Battista Varani interceded on his behalf. I am writing to let you know about a great cause that is dear to my heart and about our experience with Saint Camilla Battista Varani. We prayed daily to her for her intercession, when my husband Vincent Gonzales was first diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor in June of 2010.

By the grace of God, days after having a grand mal seizure at a family wedding reception and being flown to a hospital in Atlantic City, NJ where we learned of his tumor, a friend brought a first class relic of Saint Camilla Battista Varani to our house and we prayed and learned about who she is. Her devotion to the passion and suffering of our Lord is inspiring. She was a cloistered Poor Clare sister and, even in spiritual crisis, she strived to identify herself with the sufferings of Jesus and His Passion. Sometimes with the onset of a cancer diagnosis and the fear that ensues, we struggle, too, and may have a spiritual crisis. Why is this happening? Why now? Why our family? It is normal to wonder where God is in the midst of an illness. We asked her intercession for Vince's healing. We were told she had been known to have aided in healing of cases of people in the area with seizures. Vince hasn't had another seizure since the one in June 2010. After brain radiation and a daily chemotherapy regimen for six months, he stayed strong without complications. We knew St. Camilla had been praying to the Lord with us. She was canonized that year on October 17th, in Rome. We were told that miracles often happen during the time of a saint's canonization, which I believe this case is a testament to.

She is a saint for our times and her extended family lives in our area. We were even blessed with having her relic in our home for a short time. As a family, we venerated the relic and prayed her prayer. My husband recalls feeling a chill run down the back of his neck and back at that time. I also would feel a vibration run down my spine when I vigorously prayed to her daily to intercede for his healing of mind, body, and soul. I know it sounds funny, but, to me, it was confirmation that she was praying with us. I told her and the Lord that, if there was anything I could do to help with her cause, please place it on my heart to do so. During that time in the fall of 2010, through the power of the Holy Spirit, I was moved to share St. Camilla's relic with as many people as possible. This, in itself, is a small example of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. I was honestly scared to put myself out there and sound like a "holy roller," worrying what others may think of my belief in the saints and the Lord. Religion is a private thing for many. However, with her help, I was able to set all that aside and share our experience and what I knew about Saint Camilla with others in our area and through email with all those across the country who were praying for Vince. The school children at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Southampton, PA and St. Hillary's Parish in Rydal, PA got to venerate her relic and hear about St. Camilla's life, at the All Saint's Day liturgies. Her prayer card which was touched to her relic went home to the families in these parishes. I personally visited children and adults with the relic who suffered with seizure disorders and illness. Like my husband, many reported feeling a great sense of peace come over them when praying and venerating the relic.

Recently, this past May, I brought her first class relic to a friend of ours and his family. He has been suffering for four years with Melanoma. We have asked many to pray to Saint Camilla for

her intercession for a miracle for him. Since that time, our friend has miraculously come through some imminent life threatening complications from his cancer. He also recently was accepted into a new trial for his cancer. We believe that Saint Camilla is instrumental in this divine intervention. We continue to pray for a miracle for him and a cure for his cancer. We also are praying daily for her intercession for a relative with a nerve sheath tumor. She recently has received some interventions to help relieve excruciating daily pain she endures. We believe Saint Camilla is praying with us to rid her of her pain.

Now, ten years later in the fall of 2020, miraculously, my husband Vincent is alive and well. Although he still has some tumor and scar tissue that remains in his head, he is symptom free and cancer free. We claim it as done, over, and cured. Praise God, all glory to Him! Vince has been here to witness his four children grow up, make their sacraments, graduate grade school and two from high school. Our oldest son, who turned 12 the day of his diagnosis, graduated from college this spring. Vince was also here to support and care for his father who passed from cancer last year. Since his cancer, Vince became a Director of Nursing at Cancer Treatment Center of America here in Philadelphia. He uses his experience to help other cancer patients. We believe it is all a miracle. We whole heartedly gave this diagnosis to the Lord and asked him to make good of this horrible time of our lives. Days after that prayer, our friends introduced us to Ed Varani and through him we learned of Blessed Camilla Battista Varani. We believe that the example and spiritual direction of St. Camilla Battista Varani who also experienced similar times of distress in her life helped us to turn it all over to the Lord's will. After a few opinions, Vince was able to discern where to be treated for his cancer and he received great care at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. We experienced tremendous support and love from so many during his illness. People were so moved, there was even a huge benefit for him with over six hundred people, which many say was a spiritual experience of its own. Jesus' love was so evident that night. Numerous other fundraisers helped to support our family while he was unable to work during the illness; all parts of this miracle.

We will never know what the outcome would have been without the fervent prayers to Saint Camilla to pray with us. Miracles aren't always just an illness going away. They are made up of the experiences in getting to the end result. They are the people, the doctors, and the events that support us. Through the grace of God, who put it on the hearts and minds of others, Vince received strength to fight and peace to survive such a difficult time. It certainly felt like divine intervention. We believe Saint Camilla interceded as she sits close to our Lord in The Communion of Saints and that Vince received a miracle.

We are excited and hopeful that there will be shrine for St. Camilla here in the Philadelphia area. This has been a goal for the Varani family, the Poor Clare sisters, and all of those who support her cause for many years. We are believers among many! From our own experience, we have really come to appreciate the availability of a Shrine, close to home. Vince and I took the children to the National Shrine for St. Rita of Cascia on Broad Street in South Philly. It was an awesome peaceful place. We went to mass in the intimate chapel, venerated the relics, had a tour of the beautiful church and prayed. On the way home from there we stopped at the St. John Neumann shrine on North 5th Street in Philadelphia. That, too, was a moving and comforting

experience. We continued to go there often after Vince's doctor appointments at Jefferson University Hospital. We went to the Padre Pio Shrine in Barto, PA, and a dear friend had a mass said for Vince during the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, which hundreds took part in. It was one of the most memorable spiritual experiences of my life, to have so many praying together for him. How blessed we are to have these sacred places so close by. They brought hope and spiritual comfort to us on Vince's journey of healing. We are hopeful that there will be a local shrine for St. Camilla Battista, and we look forward to hearing many more miracles accredited to her intercession as more people learn of her sainthood and follow her example of spiritual direction.

It is no coincidence that I was able to write this testimony of our experience, after praying with Saint Camilla Battista Varani today, on All Saints Day, November 1, 2020. Now, more than ever, we need to pray for all the help we can get. We thank Saint Camilla for her intercession. Receiving this miracle of my husband surviving his cancer has strengthened our faith. It is important to us to share how the saints, like Saint Camilla, are with us today. I read that Saint Camilla promised, "From Heaven, I will never forget you." I believe she hasn't and so we continue to pray. We will not forget her great example to love and serve the Lord!

Written by Shiela A. Gonzales November 1, 2020