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Being a physician, I am a skeptic of sorts and do not readily believe every report of a miracle. However, I do believe that we are here on the earth for a reason, namely that a superior Being has put us here on the earth and that He desires to have some sort of relationship with us. Given this belief, I believe there has to be a reason for everything and that God does everything for the good of those who seek Him.

I remember reading an article published in the American Heart Journal about how prayer does not help patients undergoing heart surgery and in fact the patients who were prayed for had more complications. I say to those who did that study, I could have told you that. What a waste of time! God does not work in a “statistically significant” fashion. God is never predictable. Maybe it was His will for some to have complications that His name would be glorified. Why would God make himself subjective to a scientific study? Why would God, who is by nature unlimited, limit himself to the confines of a scientific study? Also, God always leaves room for doubt in these situations to really see who believes in Him.

I would like to tell you a story of a relative of mine through which I was able to see God and through which the prayers of many availed. He called me one Tuesday morning reporting to me that he had black stool and that he had passed out twice on Monday afternoon. Medically speaking, black stools are a sign of blood loss from the stomach or small intestine. The fact that he had passed out signified that he had lost so much blood that his blood pressure had dropped and he was not able to support himself by supplying the necessarily blood flow to certain organs, foremost the brain. So that Tuesday morning I told him to go immediately to the emergency room.

He was admitted as expected as he had lost a lot of blood from his baseline counts and his blood pressure was low. He was quickly resuscitated and procedures were performed to evaluate the source of his bleeding. The procedures were all negative and further complicating the issue was a prior surgery that is called a gastric bypass in which part of his stomach and small intestine could not be visualized. After several blood transfusions, the doctors noted that his blood counts had been stable and felt like the source of the bleeding would just heal itself on proper medical therapy. He was then discharged from the hospital.

He went home that Friday, still continuing to have black stools and developed new onset shortness of breath and continued weakness. He went back to the emergency room and he was noted to have lower blood counts than when he was discharged from the hospital. Many tests were done and all negative but still part of his stomach and small intestine were not visualized. A procedure was done where he swallowed a pill with a camera to visualize his entire gastrointestinal tract. There was some old blood further down and possibly thought to be arising from the stomach, but still that part of stomach could not be visualized. He continued to need blood transfusions everyday (averaging about 1 unit a day)

The GI physician told me of a new procedure called double balloon endoscopy in which most of the gastrointestinal tract could be visualized and an intervention could be done to possibly stop any bleeding. So we called the manufacturer of this device and found out which centers were doing this procedure. We finally found a facility and doctor that would do it in a timely manner so we transferred my relative to this facility. The procedure was done about one day after he was admitted. To our disappointment and the doctors as well, the procedure was not successful and he would have to go on to have some sort of exploratory surgery.

Now my relative was not the ideal surgical candidate and complications would somewhat be anticipated. It so happened that our priest visited him in the hospital one day before he was scheduled to have surgery. The priest was a man of great faith and at least to my knowledge, not known for any miracles. In fact, we had tried to delay his coming because so much had been going on until this point. However, when he came, he told my relative that God would heal him and that he would need to tell this to everyone to all generations that God healed him. In retrospect this is similar to what Moses told the Israelites before they entered the promise land, "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren (Deut 4:9)."

My relative dismissed this as part of the everyday casual priestly visit to a sick person. However, while the priest was walking out of the hospital he told my relative's sister that he was healed and that he would not need any aggressive surgery.

When I heard this, my first thought was: Why is he trying to do this and raise our hopes so high that we are just going to be disappointed? I know that many were praying and fasting, many of which do not do this at all, but come on, surgery was inevitable. We were even willing to accept that if it was his time to die, it was God's will. However, a few hours after our priest left, my relative had another bowel movement which had a little bit of the black stool, which he had noted before, and then behold, as vulgar as it sounds, a normal bowel movement. He had his blood counts checked which showed a hemoglobin of 8, which was low, given that he had a blood transfusion a couple of days ago. But then it was rechecked for reasons not clear to me, it was 10. Then the following morning it was 12 and he continued to have normal bowel movements!

They were planning to take him to surgery but before surgery they decided to place a tube directly into his stomach (gastrostomy tube) and visualize his stomach and intestines, the part not yet visualized. This showed no evidence of bleeding! The doctors were baffled since they thought for sure the bleeding was coming from this hidden area of the stomach and upper intestines. Additionally, since his hemoglobin was increased and he was no longer having black stools, there was no need to do an aggressive surgery to visualize the lower intestines.

I was thoroughly confused at this point, either the bleed was somewhere else (lower intestine) and stopped on its own or a miracle had been done or both. I believe it was a miracle given no evidence of bleeding in the stomach and small intestine, the rapid rise of

hemoglobin, the priest's visit, and the rapid resolution of the black stools (which can sometimes take up to 2 weeks to resolve even after bleeding has stopped).

Miracles however will never be accepted in the medical literature or community because everything has to have an explanation because it is a science as well as an art. However, God is never confined to science and is beyond our understanding. I believe the hand of God was clear. He had worked through the doctors to get to the point where He would show His work! Sometimes God works through doctors but sometimes He chooses to do it Himself. We have to accept that we are limited (but at the same time doing our best) and realize that God is unlimited and all-Powerful.

Later on I asked the priest what he had done. He said, "I did nothing. God did it all. I was just the messenger."

Glory to be God forever. Amen.