



Miracles Took Place Through Confidence in Intercessory Prayer

By Viola Lifrieri

I would like to focus on a reading from **1 John. 5: 14.**

“Behold, we have this confidence in God, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours. *If anyone sees his brother sinning . . . he should pray to God and he will give him life.*”

And from the Gospel on the Wedding of Cana, we see Mary interceding at a wedding for a couple who have run out of wine for their guests. She sees their lack and becomes their advocate. She knows they need help and that it is her Son to whom she must go. Mary is confident in approaching her Son and knows that she can ask anything according to his will. **As far as hearing His Mother, He is right there with her, and both are present to all at the wedding.** Mary knows that what she asks of her Son, He can and will do.

Now, I know there is a greater theological message here than the one I’m going to share, but there is a miraculous story about a man named Claude Newman who had a conversion through the intercession of our Blessed Virgin Mary.

Claude Newman was a young black man who was imprisoned for killing his grandmother’s abusive second husband. He was scheduled to be executed on January 20, 1944. While he was in jail awaiting execution, he shared a cellblock with four other prisoners.

One day Claude had noticed a medal around the neck of one of his cell mates. He inquired as to what it was. The prisoner he was speaking to, pulled the medal off his neck and threw it to the floor.

Claude felt drawn to it, picked it up and put it on, not knowing whose image was on it. (Today we know it was the Miraculous Medal of Mary)

That night, while sleeping, Claude was awakened by a touch upon his wrist. Startled, He saw what he explained as **“the most beautiful Woman that God ever Created.”** Shaken, and thinking he had seen a ghost, he started screaming that he wanted a Catholic priest.

The following morning Fr. O’Leary came to visit Claude and the four other men that shared his cellblock. All asked the priest for religious instruction in the Catholic faith. Many more in the prison also sought religious instruction. After a time of instruction, Claude and the others were received into the Catholic Church.

The January 20th date had arrived, and Claude was ready to die, but at the last minute he had received a two week stay of execution. He was deeply grieved, and asked: “What have I done wrong these past weeks that God would refuse me my going home?” Fr. O’Leary felt inspired to share with Claude that “Maybe Our Blessed Mother wants you to pray for the conversion of a prisoner named James Hugh’s, who had no love for God or man.” For the next two weeks Claude generously offered his sacrifice and prayers for his fellow prisoner. On Feb. 4 Claude was put to death by the electric chair. Father O’Leary testified: “I’ve never seen anyone go to his death as joyfully and happily.”

On May 14, 1944 James Hugh’s was executed. But what took place just before the execution, was something very miraculous. Minutes before the execution James called out, “Sheriff, get me a priest!” Fr. O’Leary came into the room and heard James’ confession and he received an instant conversion of his soul through the intercession of Claude and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

(As I paraphrase this verse from 1 John) Claude Newman came to a place of **“confidence”** in God, that if he asked anything according to God’s will, God would hear him. And believing this, he knew that what he was asking of God for James would be his.” As Mary believed when she asked Jesus to save the day, so to speak, at the Wedding of Cana, Claude believed that God would answer his prayer for James. **Jesus’ gift of salvation is offered to all;** and, through the intercession of Claude and Mary, James repented and received the gift of eternal life, not eternal torment.

Today's first reading impresses upon us that, "If anyone sees his brother sinning . . . he should pray to God and he will give him life." At the wedding of Cana, in a Mississippi prison in 1944, and today, Mary continues to intercede for us, and calls us to unite our hearts and prayers with her for the conversion and salvation of sinners in order that they may have life.

We are invited to pray with Mary and Claude for the conversion of souls, and that God (as is prayed between each decade of the Rosary) "will lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of His mercy."

I ask you to pause for a moment and think. Is there a person who comes to mind who may be hateful, someone imprisoned, abusive, a gossip, someone who is rude, or living an ungodly life? Do we keep them "imprisoned" in their sin by our choosing to judge them, or do we pray with ***confidence*** believing that God will hear our prayers and free them from the sins that bind them? Let us believe, as we intercede, rejoicing that "God will give them life."

Or - Could the person who needs prayer be you?

I know it was me, and it's still me.

About 10 years ago I did something that I considered to be a great sin in my life, and I believed that God would no longer love me. I anguished over what I had done. After learning of this story of Claude Newman, and his miraculous conversion through Mary's intercession, I now recognize that I was drawn to the Sacrament of Reconciliation through the love and intercession of friends, priests, and without a doubt, Mary's intercession. I received absolution of my sin and was reconciled with God that very day. My life has been ***miraculously*** changed ever since.

I continue to seek God's forgiveness – for I sin daily – and I seek the prayers of others so that I may have the grace and strength to continually turn to God. And - ***"Yes"*** – the prayers of my unknown intercessors were and are still being answered – I continue to experience God's graces daily.

Dare I not do the same for each of you, or brothers or sisters in need of prayer?

Dare you not pray for one another?