

## MIRACLES

Our parish priest retired late last year, and our new one is also the parish priest of a neighbouring parish. As I thought about the shortage of priests in the UK, a miracle seemed needed to solve it.

I asked myself, why don't we experience miracles like they used to at the time of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

I asked myself if I knew of any miracles that had not resulted in them becoming shrines like Lourdes and Fatima. I must admit that I only know of one through a story I remembered reading in the AFRICA magazine, which the St. Patrick's Missionary Society produces. If ever I'd heard of a present-day miracle this was it. It was written by Fr. Ray Murtagh a missionary priest working in Kenya. He was 90 years old when he died (1932 – 2022). This is his story:

One day, while working as a missionary priest in Kenya, Fr. Ray was approached after mass and asked if he would go to the outstation of Chepterit and baptise a woman. He agreed and was taken to the village and the woman's home.

There on the bed was a woman with advanced **AIDS**. She was very emaciated and tried to greet him but did not have the strength. He baptised her, and she took the name Mary as she had been taught about the love and kindness of the mother of Jesus. Fr. Ray said he would return the following Sunday and give her the Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick.

He asked why she was not in the hospital as he left the house. He was told she had been for the last six months, but now her condition was so bad she had been allowed to leave as they could do no more for her.

Fr. Ray returned the following Sunday and, as promised, gave her the eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick. She was very grateful. Relatives from her home village appeared and took her back so that she could die among her family, and Fr. Ray heard no more about her.

Years later, Fr. Ray was asked to return to Chepterit for several infant baptisms. When he arrived, there was a big party to welcome home some Christians who had been to America for an education. It was a joyous occasion with food and drink for everyone.

Fr. Ray did the baptisms and was about to leave when he was approached by a plump woman who asked him if he recognised her. He apologised and said no. She then explained that she was the woman who had been dying of Aids many years ago when he had baptised and given her Holy Communion and the Anointing of the Sick. The change in her was amazing. In front of him was a healthy, plump woman.

She explained that when she'd returned to her home village, the Aids disappeared, and she got well again. She then returned to the village where he had met her to thank everyone for what they had done for her.

I do not doubt that her cure would have profoundly affected the faith of the people who lived in that village, and I would have loved to have known what Fr. Ray thought about it.

When I think about his story, I believe it was a miracle, probably due to her faith and the Sacrament of the Sick. She was a living miracle, a witness to God's infinite love, mercy, and compassion.

It all reminded me that at the time of Jesus, he worked miracles to impress onlookers so that they would remember his teachings of love. Before he ascended into heaven, he gave his disciples the power to work miracles through his name again so that the onlookers would be impressed and remember what his disciples taught. Jesus knew how important miracles were in helping to get his message listened to and understood. I'm sure that every year, miracles happen around the world that are not recorded. What a shame.

We've all heard of the sacred international shrines, such as LOURDES and FATIMA, that are visited by millions each year because of the miracles that happen there.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if each country had a centre where miracles were recorded, investigated, and approved or not by the Catholic church? People would flock to hear about the ones approved. This could automatically strengthen their faith and remind them of God's wonders.

These miracles might even inspire some men to acknowledge that God was calling them to be priests.