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# **In Poland: A Script Written by God**

Last March, a few days after her 80th birthday, Agnieszka's mother passed away in Warsaw from Covid-19. But the script that God was writing had a happy ending.

06/13/2021

My name is Agnieszka and I live in Warsaw, Poland. I would like to tell you the story about my mother and how a priest assisted her during her final moments in the hospital.

I am moved when I look at our family photo taken last Christmas. We had no idea then that this would be our last “complete” reunion here on earth, with my mother and our seven children.

Our oldest son, Benek, flew in from Panama, and Schola came from Italy. With our whole family present, we moved forward the date of our youngest son Maks’ First Communion. Of course the topic of the pandemic was a big part of our Christmas conversation. Grandma told us that she wanted to get vaccinated and was waiting for a date.

Twice, just before being vaccinated, problems suddenly arose. First she had a mild infection, and the second time other symptoms, including a fever, cough and headache. A test confirmed that it was Covid-19 .

**Essential items**

A few days later, her oxygen level dropped dramatically, so we had to take her to the hospital emergency room. During the first two days in the hospital, my mother didn't answer her phone when we called. We assumed that she was weak and preferred to rest.

After two days I decided to go to visit her. It was the day of her 80th birthday. I added a bouquet of roses to the essential items I had prepared. I was already in the car when the sudden thought came to go back and add a rosary, Saint Josemaría's book *The Way*, and Blessed Alvaro del Portillo's prayer card, whose birthday was the same as my mother's. When I got there, someone from the hospital security staff said he would bring these items to her, since I wasn't allowed to enter.

## **Hours on the phone**

Within a few days, my mother started answering her phone. The conversations were short and painful. In order to say anything, she first had to remove her oxygen mask, and without it she immediately began having problems breathing. She asked about her grandchildren, and regretted not being able to say goodbye to them. She said she was dying, although it was hard to tell what her real condition was and the doctors said she was stable. I asked my mother if she would like to receive the sacraments if possible, and she said yes.

I called the hospital several times that day. Often no one answered since the staff was overburdened with work. Each time someone answered, besides asking about my Mother's condition, I tried to find out if there was any possibility of a priest visiting her. At first I was told, "We will look into it when we have time."

I understood, since everyone there had too much work.

After a few days I was informed that the hospital didn't have a chaplain and there was no possibility of allowing a priest from outside to enter. Meanwhile, my mother's oxygen levels continued to decline dangerously.

### **A priest for everyone**

My mother was put on a ventilator with severe heart and lung failure. The doctors told us we should be prepared for her death.

One of the hospital employees gave me a direct phone number for the woman in charge of the hospital. She assured me that if I could find a priest willing to come to the hospital, she would personally let him in and take him to my mother. So after a few more phone calls, I found a

priest who said he would be happy to go.

The priest went to the hospital the same day. Later that day he sent me a text message: "I have been with your mother and she has received the anointing of the sick." I stared at the text message for a long time, giving thanks for what had seemed impossible. But that was not the end of the story. The hospital director had a list of several dozen patients who might like to receive the last sacraments, and she personally accompanied the priest while he visited each one, and all who wanted to received the sacraments.

The director of the hospital herself called me right after the priest's departure, and told me how grateful and happy those people were, who feared dying alone without the assistance of a priest.

Nine days later, just as I was leaving the chapel where I had been praying for my mother before the Blessed Sacrament, the hospital phone rang. She had just passed away. Like so many other people during these months, she died alone, although surrounded by the prayers of many loved ones through the communion of saints. Thanks to those prayers, through the intercession of Saint Joseph, the patron saint of a good death, after a week of incessant phone calls we received the news of my mother's death with serenity, and I pray that she too received this grace.

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