

Blessed Guadalupe Ortiz devotion in Butuan City

Favor granted: "our bonding as a family has become solid and more supernatural."

06/20/2021

On February 1, I received a call from my brother that our only sister was rushed to the hospital. She was having difficulty breathing. It was Covid. Everyone in the household in Butuan City (Philippines) got it, including my parents.

All were forced to stay in the quarantine facility, as local government protocols required. My sister was left alone in the hospital. I was the only family member left to attend to my family's needs. But I was in Manila and could not fly to Butuan due to strict travel restrictions. I had to coordinate things remotely with relatives and friends who were on the ground there. That was stressful.

I was entrusting things to Blessed Guadalupe. Just last December, my sister (mother of 2 daughters) was diagnosed with kidney failure. After days of trying, I finally got to speak with her online. She introduced me to her attending physician, a lady doctor, from whom I received regular updates regarding her condition. This gave me much relief!

On February 6, the physician messaged me that my sister had to

undergo a procedure to prevent the virus from damaging her other organs. A feeling of helplessness kicked in. I wished that I had a button that I could push to bring me to her side right there and then.

I sent a prayer card of Blessed Guadalupe to the physician thru Facebook messenger. Surprisingly, she knew about her. "When I was still studying in College," she said, "I would go to the Opus Dei Center to attend the activities". It was a great consolation hearing this. I felt that my sister would be taken care of well. The procedure was successful.

Some days later, my sister needed blood and oxygen, which were difficult to source at that time of Covid surge in Butuan. I could not mobilize things fast enough from where I was. To my surprise, everything was obtained that same day. I didn't have to do anything. She

could now breathe and her lungs were clearing.

At lunchtime of February 11, my aunt called from Butuan. “Your sister is deteriorating. Let’s pray for a miracle,” she said. That was a shocker. I felt like I was about to crash into a wall, defenseless and helpless. The residence where I live has an oratory with Blessed Sacrament. I went in and pleaded to God for my sister’s life. She was the go-to person in the house and in her office. I asked our Lady (it was the feast of our Lady of Lourdes) to accompany her.

I posted a prayer request on Facebook with the prayer card of Blessed Guadalupe. I asked my friends to beg God, through her intercession, for the miracle of recovery and healing. Many friends sent their comforting words and encouragement. They were praying

for a miracle. I prayed many rosaries begging God to give my sister, my best friend, a chance.

At 11:30 pm I called our household help who was at my sister's bedside. I asked her to put me on speaker phone. I told my sister: "Dear, don't be afraid! Don't be afraid! Mama Mary is there to help you. Pray to her, today is her feast day." My sister was listening and nodding in agreement said the household help.

I finished my last rosary that day when I received a call from the attending physician. She narrated the developments of the day, and gave me the news: "Your sister expired at 12:45 a.m."

I didn't know how to react. I could only say, "Thank you Doc for everything... let's pray for her." Then followed a long silence.

I called my brothers first, then my parents to break the news.

Everyone's first reaction was, "Why?" I asked God the same. I was awake the whole night and could not sleep the whole day. I kept asking: "Why did you not listen to my plea? Why? Why did you suddenly abandon me?"

The hospital bills were horrendous. Some family friends and relatives pledged financial assistance, but to my surprise, we were informed that a government agency would cover all the costs, since my sister was considered a health worker on the Covid front lines. Was this a favor granted?

Everyone in the family recovered from Covid and ended their 14-day quarantine without incidence. Yes, this was a favor granted.

At the first opportunity when travel restrictions were loosened, I went to Butuan to accompany my family. It

was an emotional reunion. In the days and weeks that followed, I found myself managing each one's frustrations and regrets; feelings of guilt, loss and loneliness.

During those weeks, we made it a point to take all meals as a family. When someone would bring up anything about my sister, the rest would listen; and we agreed to make it a habit to say a prayer for her whenever that happens. I shared with them my devotion to Blessed Guadalupe. At night, we would pray the Holy Rosary together.

I got closer to my parents and my brothers, like never before, mutually healing our wounds from the recent and not so recent past. My family has its share of conflicts and dysfunctions.

Opus Dei is not yet in Butuan City, but there are a good number of cooperators there. I was glad to meet

Father Daryl, a cooperator priest in the parish, who is a graduate of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. I set an appointment with him for confession and spiritual direction for my family before the Holy Week. I encouraged my family to see him, asking Blessed Guadalupe and my beloved sister to pray for this intention. True enough, they went to see the priest. Favor granted.

The travel restrictions tightened once more, this time because of the Covid surge in Manila. It forced me to have an extended stay with my family. Through excursions, visits to the cemetery, and sincere one-on-one conversations with my parents and brothers during those weeks, our bond has become solid and more supernatural. This is priceless. This was my sister's ardent wish for the family. This was heaven answering our prayers.

Three months after, I am back in Manila. My father, my brother-in-law, and my siblings are back to work. My mother attends her weekly assignments and activities in the parish. She and my father are enjoying the company of the grandchildren. My sister is happy in her new home and continues to help us unconditionally.

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