

Last summer I started experiencing back pain that was progressively getting worse. I happened to be an avid weight lifter and thought that maybe I just over did it while working out. By the end of the summer the pain was getting unbearable. My primary doctor sent me for an MRI of my back on September 11, 2018. The results revealed much worse news that I ever could have predicted. My L1 vertebrae had a pathological fracture that was caused by the invasion of cancer into the bone. A follow-up CT Scan of my chest and abdomen also revealed metastasis to my liver and lung. Stage 4 cancer hit me like a speeding locomotive that had no brakes. I was a healthy 54 yr old man that was happily married and the father of a precious 13 yr old boy.

Over the next 29 days my wife made several appointments at the University of Pennsylvania. After many scans, blood work, and meeting several oncologists, a plan of care was prescribed for me. Despite considering myself a positive and happy individual, unwanted depression cloaked my happy spirit. Immediate 10 rounds of proton radiation to my lumbar vertebrae ensued. At the end of my radiation treatments my oncologist started immune therapy, which helps our own immune system attack cancer. In my particular case, I was fighting metastatic melanoma.

I was raised catholic, attended 12 yrs of catholic school and attended mass weekly. I remember talking to myself and saying "how could this happen to me?" I am a good person, a practicing catholic, a healthcare worker and a good husband and father. My head was spinning and sadness became unavoidable but I still prayed and prayed.

My wife's aunt and uncle (Carol and Joe) who are members of Saint Bede's parish became aware of my diagnosis and immediately reached out to Rev. Monsignor Marine. In October 2018, just a month after I was diagnosed, I met Rev Monsignor at Saint Bede's. After meeting with him, I felt an ease of my worries and thanked him for taking the time to meet with me. Rev Monsignor Marine walked me into the church and asked me to sit in the front row while he went to get a relic of Saint Padre Pio. He asked me where exactly my cancer was and then proceeded to place the Saint Padre Pio relic against the parts of my body that had cancer. We then said prayers together and I again thanked him. I remember driving home that day with a renewed spirit and a smile on my face.

I started praying from a Prayer for Healing and Good Health booklet honoring Saint Pio of Pietrelcina. I honestly heard of Saint Padre Pio but didn't know much about him and his life but that would soon change. I didn't know why but I found myself looking up at the stained glass of the Blessed Mother Mary at my parish (Our Lady of Good Counsel) and praying to her and asking her for help. Sometime later I found out about St Padre Pio's devotion toward Mary.

The next 10 months of my life would be filled with monthly immune treatments that wreaked havoc on my body with a host of many symptoms including losing 20 pounds. In my darkest hours I never stopped praying. One weak in particular, I vomited four times and remember looking up at my wife from the bathroom floor and saying to her out loud, "I still believe". I can't tell you how many times I reached out to Saint Padre Pio and asked him to help me find peace of mind....and he did.

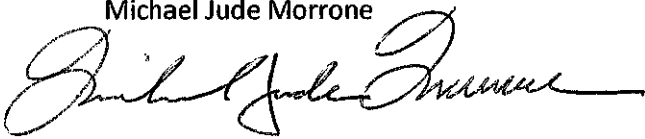
Early scans a few months into my treatments revealed wonderful news. Not only were my tumors shrinking but the tumors themselves were slowly dying. Enduring treatment after treatment and some pretty awful side effects were only achieved but through prayer and the love and support of my family and friends. My wife and son were my anchors that I relied heavily on and I love them more than words can say. By the grace of God, my last two PET Scans were clean and on August 8, 2019 (our 21st wedding anniversary) my oncologist told me that I am in remission of stage 4 metastatic melanoma.

Looking back at the last 11 months of my life, I realized how God has enabled me to look at my faith, myself, my family and friends in a new enlightened, loving, thoughtful way. What a blessed opportunity, what a gift he has bestowed on me! The outpouring of support from my family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers was nothing short of incredible. Opening up your heart and soul to prayer and trusting in Jesus is what we should all strive to do. Knowing that Jesus loves us, our family and friends love us, and in times of troubles, will always be there for us. For in the end, LOVE is all that truly matters.

Lastly, my heartfelt gratitude to Rev Monsignor Marine for meeting with me last October and blessing me with the relic of Saint Padre Pio. My family will be visiting the National Center for Saint Padre Pio in Barto, Pa. in September.

God Bless!

Michael Jude Morrone

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Jude Morrone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

"Prayer is the best weapon we have, it is the key to God's heart. You must speak to Jesus not only with your lips, but with your heart. In fact, on certain occasions, you should only speak to Him with your heart".

-Padre Pio