

Real-life miracles do exist here at Christmastime

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of the Florida Catholic staff

PALM BEACH GARDENS | This is a story about an alleged miracle, here at Christmastime, which is being considered as the “confirming miracle” that could possibly lead to the sainthood of a priest. And at the center of all the miraculous happenings is a local priest, his fellow Carmelite brothers, Catholics in the area and diocesan officials.

“It is a long process,” said Carmelite Father Michael Driscoll, priest-in-residence at St. Jude Parish in Boca Raton, who continues to serve at the parish with the Carmelite community. “Rome keeps asking for more paperwork.”

Father Driscoll believes, without a shadow of a doubt, that Carmelite Father Titus Brandsma, who was beatified in 1985 and became “blessed,” is the intercessory power responsible for him being alive today. Doctors discovered 13 years ago that Father Driscoll was eaten up with cancer, but today his excellent health is baffling everyone around him.

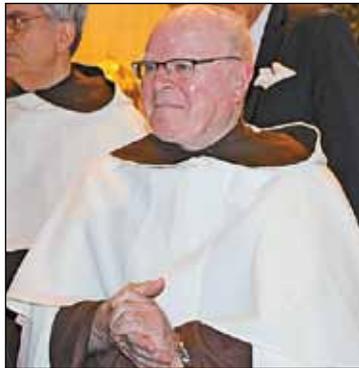
If his amazing cure of cancer is deemed scientifically unexplainable and miraculous, it may lead to Blessed Brandsma possibly becoming one of the Church’s next saints. Needless to say, everyone here who knows about it is excited, and the excitement has been building.

IS IT A BONA FIDE MIRACLE?

Here in the Diocese of Palm Beach an investigation began July 11, 2016, when Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito officially opened diocesan inquiries into the miracle case. Dec. 12 marked the closing of the investigation here, and now evidence, documents and testimo-

PRAYER

Loving God, your servant, Titus Brandsma, labored zealously in your vineyard and gave his life freely because of his faith in you. Through his intercession I ask for your mercy and help. Father, Titus never refused when he was asked for help by your people. In his name, I come to you with my needs: (mention requests). Lord, help me always to imitate the great faith, generous love and burning zeal of Titus Brandsma. Glorify your servant as he strove to glorify you. Amen.



A happy Carmelite Father Michael Driscoll smiles during the conclusion of ceremonies closing diocesan investigations into a miracle case involving him.

nies will go to Rome for more study, analysis and inspection.

Eventually, if the data and evidence is determined clear and that any contrary reports aren’t credible, Pope Francis may initiate the canonization procedure for Blessed Brandsma. But the pope has the last say in matter, and only time will tell and it may take some time, according to Father Driscoll, about the extensive formalities and process for one to be made a saint. “We will have to wait and see what happens,” said Father Driscoll.



Elizabeth Shields, a parishioner of Holy Name of Jesus in West Palm Beach and a notary for more than 30 years, signs papers as part of concluding ceremonies of diocesan investigations into a miracle case. With her is Carmelite Father Mario Esposito, center, vice-postulator of the cause of Blessed Titus Brandsma, and Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Glen Pothier, right, diocesan tribunal vicar and episcopal delegate for the miracle investigation. (PHOTOS BY LINDA REEVES | FC)

BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

To begin the story, we have to go back 13 years ago when the *Florida Catholic* first became involved. We were asked to publish a notice in the paper. It ran in the July 22, 2004, issue and was titled “St. Jude pastor needs prayers of healing.”

The brief article published did not have any specific details, but a reader might definitely assume that Father Driscoll was undergoing some type of serious procedure that needed healing prayers.

It read, “Father Michael Driscoll, O Carm, pastor of St. Jude Parish and director of liturgy for the dio-

cese, is awaiting surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. St. Jude parishioners and staff members of the Diocese of Palm Beach ask all to keep Father Driscoll in prayers of healing through the intercession of Father Titus Brandsma, a Carmelite who was beatified in 1985.” St. Jude Parish staff provided a prayer to be printed along with the plea for prayers, and it was also published.

Father Driscoll explained that his condition was critical. “It was fourth-stage and fifth-stage cancer in some parts,” he explained about the aggressive malignant melano-

PLEASE SEE **DRISCOLL, 17**



Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito signs documents which were then sealed and taken to Rome as part of diocesan investigations into an alleged miracle here in the Diocese of Palm Beach.

FYI

The diocesan inquiry process

The Diocese of Palm Beach’s involvement in the process for the investigation into the alleged miracle regarding Carmelite Father Michael Driscoll was brought to a close Dec. 12 after nearly a year and a half since opening in July 2016. Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito presided at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola ceremony. Also present was Carmelite Father Michael Kissane, prior provincial of the Carmelite Friars of the North American Province of St. Elias, and Carmelite Father J. Mario Esposito, the vice-postulator of the cause of Blessed Titus Brandsma. The closing event included a prayer service, and all the documentation that has been accumulated was presented for delivery to the Congregation for Causes of Saints in Rome, where experts there will begin their investigation of the testimony gathered here.

Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Glen Pothier, diocesan tribunal vicar and episcopal delegate for the miracle investigation, explained the process, which is long and involved. It included interviews with parishioners of St. Jude who knew about Father Driscoll’s situation and gave firsthand accounts of the prayers to Blessed Brandsma offered for him. Medical doctors also testified about Father Driscoll’s condition and their understanding of the alleged miracle. All the information was transcribed by a professional court reporter and the process was overseen by Father Albert Dello Russo, current chancellor and diocesan tribunal judge, who held the canonical position of promoter of justice required for the investigation.

After the information was reviewed, witnessed and signed, it was forwarded to the Holy See for translation into Italian and the translations were sent back as part of the Diocese of Palm Beach’s final document. Two copies were made. At the prayer service, the original and the copies were signed and each was placed in a box wrapped with a red ribbon and sealed with a wax seal with the diocesan coat of arms. The original will be kept in the diocese and the two copies were handed over to Father Esposito, who will take them to Rome for further investigation.

For more information visit
www.diocesepb.org/titusocarm



Parishioners congratulate Carmelite Father Michael Driscoll upon his 50th anniversary as a priest June 10 after Mass at St. Jude Parish in Boca Raton.



A framed photo of Blessed Titus Brandsma, a Carmelite priest and martyr, is displayed as part of diocesan ceremonies.

DRISCOLL

FROM 2

ma attacking his neck area and spreading to other parts of the body. The melanoma was real and relentless.

Melanoma is a cancer that usually starts in a certain skin cell and can quickly spread to almost any organ. Stage four and five cancer, like Father Driscoll, had are the worse phases.

At the time of his diagnosis, Father Driscoll was 62 years old. There was no mistaking his doctor's diagnosis after scans, X-rays and an MRI.

Medical data states that once the cancer spreads to organs and lymph nodes, there is a higher risk that the cancer might come back after surgery. Rarely do patients survive a long period of time following surgery — and his cancer had spread.

FAITHFUL KNEW THE POWER OF PRAYER

Prayers went up from the faithful here in the Diocese of Palm Beach. Catholics around the diocese, at the Pastoral Center, St. Jude parishioners and members of the Carmelite community everywhere began to pray.

"We were all praying for him. It was touch and go for him. We all came together in prayer as a community," said Barbara Batchelder, a parishioner of St. Jude who believes, like so many here, that prayers were lifted straight up to heaven and to Blessed Brandsma, who passed them along to God.

And who is Father Titus Brandsma? Anno Sjoerd Brandsma, later known as Father Titus Brandsma, was born Feb. 23, 1881, in Oegekooster in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands. One of Holland's leading churchmen and a great Carmelite priest, he was arrested by the Nazis and imprisoned in Germany at Dachau concentration camp. When he could no longer work, he was used for medical experiments. He died a martyr July 26, 1942, by lethal injection. He was beatified Nov. 3, 1985, by Pope John Paul II. His feast day, July 27, is observed by the Carmelite community worldwide.

The aggressive cancer that invaded Father Driscoll had attacked 10 of his lymph nodes and his salivary gland. Intensive surgery was scheduled to remove the melanoma that could be seen during surgery. After surgery, came 35 radiation treatments to kill cancer cells or keep them from growing.

Prayer warriors kept sending up prayers. Margaret Owers, who worked in the diocesan Liturgy Office with Father Driscoll, recalled those days 13 years ago like they were yesterday. Now retired and living on Florida's west coast, she spoke to us and told her story about praying for Father Driscoll.

"It was very bad," she said. "I



The brand new icon representing Blessed Titus Brandsma, a Carmelite priest and martyr, is displayed as part of diocesan ceremonies Dec. 12 at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola. The event marked the closing of diocesan investigations into a miracle case here.

had the impression that it was the worst." Father Driscoll gave her a bundle of holy cards to distribute with a healing prayer through the intercession of Father Brandsma, the man he truly believed to be in heaven and a holy person he could count on.

Owers handed out 30 to 40 cards and kept one for herself. "I continued to pray as I thought of him," said Owers, who believes along with others that the prayer on the card was powerful and heard loud and clear in heaven.

J. Albert Johnson, a Boca Raton attorney and St. Jude parishioner, is a good friend of Father Driscoll. Johnson was there for Father Driscoll when he was going through surgery and treatments. He also prayed and believes Blessed Brandsma had something to do with his friend's healing.

"His recovery to me was a divine intervention," Johnson said. "He taught me how to pray to Blessed Titus Brandsma, to whom he had a great devotion. Father Driscoll would tell me, 'I am OK because Titus is going to take care of me.' His recovery, I am sure, was through the power of prayer."

FAST FORWARD

Father Driscoll, who turned 76 in October, remains cancer free. St. Jude Parish held a big celebration June 10 for Father Driscoll's 50 years of service in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. We were there to cover the big event.

Father Driscoll was main celebrant and all smiles, appearing very joyful as he celebrated the Mass with fellow Carmelites at his side in support and celebration of his golden anniversary and life. Carmelite Father John Horan, pastor of St. Jude, welcomed all gathered for the special occasion. "Thank you for coming. It is 50 years and one week that we celebrate today," he said, referring to Father Driscoll's ordination date June 3 1967. "We



Containers secure the acts of the cause that are signed and sealed for Rome as part of investigations of a miracle here that may set the way for Blessed Titus Brandsma to become a saint of the Catholic Church.

have a lot to celebrate today. He is a wonderful priest. He is a good shepherd."

Everyone applauded and stood in respect for the man who followed God's call and continues to walk on his path, facing the twists and turns and experiencing the bad times and the good times, including what he believes to be a true-life miracle.

At one point during the Mass, he encouraged all fighting cancer

or carrying other heavy crosses to pray and have faith, and to be thankful for blessings and live every moment to the fullest. "I am going to make every day count," he said.

Father Driscoll told the *Florida Catholic* that he has personally heard testimonies from others who have come forward with miracle stories of their own linked to Blessed Brandsma, adding to his

faith in the saint candidate.

"Three people have told me stories," he said. "Two of the people live in Boca Raton. One person is up north. There may be one in England. We will just have to wait and see what happens. I have been waiting for a long time."

All are asked to continue to pray for Father Driscoll and the cause of Blessed Titus Brandsma, a holy man deserving of sainthood. ■

Very Rev. Albert A. Dello Russo, JCL
Chancellor, Diocese of Palm Beach

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