

More deathbed visions

By Matt C. Abbott April 6, 2021

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*One of my favorite books in recent years is *An Army in Heaven*, by Kelley Jankowski, a nurse who spent over 25 years in critical care before going into hospice care.*

In my June 18, 2016 [column](#), I published an email interview with Kelley. I wanted to do a follow-up column, so I very recently reached out to her to see if she'd be willing to share a couple of experiences that occurred after her book was published.

Kelley's response is published below (lightly edited by me):



Kelley Jankowski

After 37 years of nursing, I was finally able to retire as of late 2019, right before the COVID crisis hit. God most definitely has His own plans, and the Blessed Mother was most instrumental in letting me know it was time. But that's another story.

One experience toward the end of my time in hospice stuck with me as my late parents were involved. My father was a physician who passed in 2011, and my mother died in 2017. One evening when I was driving into work for my third night in a row, I was feeling particularly exhausted. I remember having a mental conversation with my parents: *I know you're both in heaven having a grand old time, but your children and grandchildren need your help, and if you wouldn't mind, could you look in on those left behind once in a while?*

That night, I took care of a 91-year-old Jewish woman who had a rare form of cancer with an eroding tumor, which the surgeon explained was only 2mm away from her femoral artery. She was in our unit for pain management and on bleeding precautions, for if this tumor invaded that artery, she would bleed out very quickly.

Her daughter, who had very little faith in the afterlife, explained to me one evening that her mother was “hallucinating” – speaking to people who’ve been gone for years. She made several attempts to correct her mother, and sometimes you could hear her arguing with her. She came to the nurses station exasperated, blaming the “hallucinations” on the morphine. I explained to her that she had received no medications in 14 hours – they were given only as needed – and the 2 mg of morphine given to her had long worn off. I tried to explain that visits from deceased relatives were a common experience of people nearing their end.

“Even if you don’t believe in these things, these visions are very real to your mom. Maybe instead of dismissing her statements as hallucinations, why not ask her to explain what she’s seeing?”

The daughter dismissed that idea and left for the night, and for the most part, my little lady slept. The following morning around 5:45, I went in, freshened her up, changed her brief and positioned her on her back so she could take her morning pills. I told her I’d be back in a minute and went to the med room to pull her medications. When I returned to her room she was looking over her left shoulder and speaking to someone I couldn’t see, nodding and smiling. We see this so often and it’s so commonplace that I figured she was speaking to her deceased family.

“Here’s your morning medicine, Mrs. X...”

She looked over at me and smiled, took the medicine cup, looked over her left shoulder again, gulped down her pills, and

when she handed me the medicine cup she said, “Kelley, both your parents are here.” Immediately a rush of adrenaline hit and I broke out in goose bumps.

“They are? Both of them?”

“Yes sweetie, your dad is very tall – and your mom is short.”

“Hang on a minute Mrs. X, I’ll be right back.”

I went to the nurses station and pulled my phone from the drawer and went back into her room. I kept a photo of my parents’ wedding day and pulled it up. I gave her the phone and she immediately pointed to them and said,

“Yes! Yes, that’s them!”

Then she pointed over toward the window. Choking back a rush of emotion, I told her, “Well, they’re very good people, and they’ll watch out for you.” She touched my hand and smiled. “Yes, everything’s going to be just fine.” So I left and finished with my other patients.

At 7 a.m. I was sitting at the nurses station giving report to the oncoming nurse when her daughter came into the unit and went into her mom’s room. You could hear them talking and after a bit, her daughter came up to the desk and said, “My mom just told me that she met both your parents this morning.”

“Yes, she did.”

“See, I told you she was hallucinating.”

“Did I ever tell you that both of my parents are dead? Did she tell you what they looked like”?

She looked at me kind of wide-eyed and said, “She said your dad was tall with blue eyes and your mother was short and had a beautiful smile.”

“She’s absolutely right – and she picked them out of a photograph. What your mom has been seeing is true. She’s not hallucinating.” I smiled up at her and she stepped back a little from the counter.

“I just got goose pimples!” she said as she rubbed her arms with her hands. Then she walked back into her mom’s room.

Just thought this was an amazing experience! It reinforced the truth that my parents are always there, watching over us, involved in our daily lives as good parents. And even though they're gone, they haven't forgotten their children. It was an experience I never expected – and one that will stay with me.

The other experience didn't happen to me specifically, but to my very good friend and fellow nurse, Betty. To preface this story, she and I are both Catholic and are strong believers in the sacramentals of the Church for spiritual protection, especially holy water. She and I both kept a bottle of it in our bags for patients suffering spiritual attacks during the dying process: the agitation and restlessness, the fear seen in their faces and other tell-tale signs that a spiritual battle is going on. I can't tell you how efficacious it was in easing these situations when nothing else worked.

There was a nurse who worked in our unit who was pretty much an atheist. I'll call her Pam. Pam worked the same days that Betty did, and they often reported off to each other as she worked only days and Betty only nights. She often scoffed at Betty's faith, telling her that her “magic water” had no more power than the water that came from the faucet.

One night when Betty was driving to work, she received a call from Pam asking if she had her “magic water” with her. She proceeded to tell her that there was a woman on the unit who needed it. When Betty arrived, she received report from Pam, who was spooked and nervous.

Apparently, the woman in room 12 was dying but there were things happening in the room that were unexplainable: chairs moving across the floor, lights flickering, and a terrible presence in the room. The aide came into the conference room and reported that the priest had arrived. She showed him into room 12. Betty looked at the Pam and asked her if she phoned the priest.

“I had to do something. Things in that room were straight out of the movies!”

When report finished, they both ran down to room 12 because they heard screaming. When they walked into the room, the woman was lying in the bed but no longer screaming. Father was reciting the Last Rite prayers. They checked the patient and she was pale, ice-cold and clammy, and her hands and lips were cyanotic. Betty asked Father if he needed anything or wanted them to stay. He shook his head no.

After several minutes the priest returned to the nurses station, pulled Pam aside and said the patient had died. Pam was giving report to another nurse but got up and went into the room. The priest went up to Betty and asked for her chart so he could sign the form indicating that the Last Rites had been given.

Over the patient intercom, the light went on from room 12 and a deep, guttural voice came over the intercom that screamed, “Get your hands off of her; I'm not done with her yet!”

Pam came running up the hallway, obviously upset, shaking, looked over at Betty while grabbing her bag and said, “That's it, I'm done!” and she ran out of the unit. **The priest looked at Betty, pulled his crucifix from his pocket and showed it to Betty. She said the crucifix was bent to the right and the Corpus was bent forward. Betty asked him what happened.**

“She was probably possessed. Who else but Satan would force the Lord to bow?”

He put the crucifix back in his pocket, signed the chart and left. Betty grabbed the aide and went into the room to check the patient. Since the other nurse left so abruptly, she pronounced the patient and left the room.

For many months after that, room 12 was left open because strange things happened in that room. The call bell would go on and off at all hours of the day and night. The door would close on its own, furniture would be rearranged; sometimes chairs would

be stacked. We had a priest go in and bless the room one night when he came to see another patient. When we explained what went on in that room, he agreed to do a minor exorcism. This helped tremendously and the room was quiet. Most of us would do our best to just leave the room empty, knowing what happened when it was last occupied.

Pam, the nurse who left so abruptly, quit that very day and never returned, not even to empty out her locker. When she was phoned about retrieving her things, she said, “Just throw them out. I will never come back there again.” Last we heard, she was working from home as a nurse with an insurance company.

[Click here](#) to order a paperback copy of *An Army in Heaven*.

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Fr. Perozich comments —

I believe that the Holy Immortal Trinity created, saved, and sanctifies us, is full of mercy and care, and wishes us to be with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever in heaven.

No evil person or power is greater than God, although evil can exert itself, but is vanquished by those in union with the Trinity in prayer in God's Holy Catholic Church.

My experience of people dying and seeing loved ones many times reflects Kelly's experience.

My experience of an exorcism event reflects the bent crucifix. I emailed it to the author and share it with you.

This article reaffirms my faith in God and my commitment to Him who is committed to me and all believers.

Matt,

Great article to show that the power of faith in God wins over evil.

Once I was assisting a priest in an exorcism rite. My role assigned by him was to pray the rosary and the long St. Michael prayer in Latin. I also gently was to hold the wood part of a crucifix, which normally hung on a cord by the door, in front of the person suffering so that the crucifix be visible to the person as the priest prayed his exorcism prayers.

After the rite ended that evening, I returned the crucifix to its regular place hanging the cord on the nail by the door with the crucifix suspended below.

The next day both arms of the crucifix were broken and the corpus was hanging upside down.

I placed that crucifix in the arms of my St. Michael statue where it remained after that.

Fr. Richard Perozich