Snatched from Death's Door

The Story of Paul Jalsevac

Updated September 27, 2001

LATEST REPORT ON PAUL JALSEVAC

For those who have been following the progress of Paul Jalsevac, critically injured in a vehicle accident in Virginia on March 4, there is much very good news. Confounding everyone's expectations, Paul has been back at Christendom College since September and is doing very well. See more information at bottom of story under "Update" or

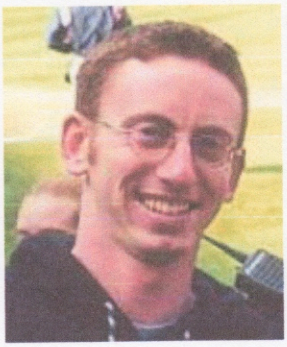
See http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/paul/paul.html

So what is prayer? Mere incantation to God, to some Trinity, saint, or holy relic, for relief from life's everyday woes? Or is it simply talking with God, as Father of all, who sees all, loves all, can help with all, and to Whom we are forever grateful for His visible and timely intercession in our life?

Our Lady at Garabandal continually begs us to pray, not only for our own redemption, but for others, too. The following story points out again how the power of personal prayer, a discussion with God, always has a positive influence on your life and that of others.

The story involves an automobile accident, and with the personal intercession of prayer by an organized round-the-world effort, the victim--Paul--was saved. The words of his father put it best, ..Being so utterly helpless, many of the families turn to the only thing that they can - prayer. In our case, the prayers of friends and families have brought Paul back to us from death's door. Paul is living proof that our trust in God can best be expressed with prayers to Him.

* * *



On the afternoon of Saturday, March 5, 2001, college student Paul Jalsevac, the son of *LifeSite* manager Steve Jalsevac of Toronto was involved in a serious car accident at the entrance to his school. His injuries were so substantial that he was transported from hospital to hospital, which ultimately led to a series of events that transformed his very physical being into one of an example of resolute prayer.

His massive internal injuries resulted in a series of painful surgeries; tremendous loss of blood; constant vigilance by attending medical staff; extensive rehabilitation; and finally, a worldwide use of prayer for his victory over his wounds. In one most notable instance, near Easter, Paul was touched by a relic from Our Lady of Garabandal, which was the positive turning point of his healing process.

Read the full account of his father's diary as it happened.....http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/paul/paul.html OR below for a summary:

* * *

Here are some exerpts from his father's diary:

Saturday, March 5, 2001

Just days before he was scheduled to leave for New York to assist with pro-life lobby efforts at the United Nations, Campaign Life Coalition Youth member, 20-year-old, Paul Jalsevac, was in a serious head-on car accident at about 3pm, at the entrance of Christendom College near Front Royal, Virginia,USA where he is a student. He was critically injured, with great damage done to his liver and great loss of blood. It took intense efforts at Front Royal's/Warren County Hospital to initially stop much of the massive internal bleeding. Paul was then transferred to the trauma unit of Inova Fairfax Hospital near Washington D.C. via a trauma ambulance which had been sent from Fairfax, an hour from Front Royal (unfortunately, the Fairfax trauma helicopter could not be dispatched at the time of the accident because of bad weather conditions). His college went on a fast of bread and water for Paul's well being.

After surgery to stop his bleeding, the surgeons "packed" his liver, in the hope that it may heal, which was split in two. Doctors did not close Paul up after surgery due to pressure on his internal organs. During the operation Paul's heart stopped once requiring 12 pints of blood, making for more than 30 pints total received thus far. He lost a great deal of blood, causing his heart to stop for two minutes. Thankfully, the medical team managed to resuscitate him, but had to remove his spleen. His pelvis was fractured, and he also suffered a partially collapsed lung and head injuries. He was also placed on a respirator. He was in very critical condition.

During the ordeal, students and professors from Christendom College stayed at the hospital with the parents. Some 25 supporters were with his parents and elder brother in the waiting room constantly. Paul and his family were placed on prayer lists and chains nationwide across America--with families, schools and organizations pledging to pray for him.

Prayers were again required, as Paul developed some complications. His temperature went up, indicating a possible infection, and he was not correctly processing the food that was being fed via a stomach tube. Paul then also required a surgical tracheotomy to replace the respirator.

The parents wrote the following: "*We wish to express our huge gratitude for the tremendous volume of prayers and support that Paul and we have received since the accident. We are convinced that the prayers are the only reason that Paul has survived such injuries. The spontaneous and sustained help we received in Virginia and Toronto has helped us to transform this otherwise heavy cross, into one that produced many blessings. We have met many new, wonderful, concerned and generous friends, and have been moved by the deep love for Paul from his many friends at Christendom College and Toronto. We thank you, thank you, and thank you*!!"

Then Paul was transferred via a specially equipped Learjet to the Sunnybrook Critical Care Unit in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He finally was stabilized enough to make this trip. He had a tube on each side for his lungs because of air pockets caused by both the accident, and shock, which prevent full expansion of the lungs.

He was then placed in an isolation room. Of course, everyone's prayers for Paul and the medical staff made the final difference in getting him through each of these seemingly impossible crises. In fact, the extraordinary amount of prayer for Paul from both within the hospital and by others all over the U.S., Canada, and as far away as Mexico, Kenya and the Philippines, had a wonderful positive impact on other trauma patients and their families. His considerable suffering is producing surprising and unexpected graces.

Whole convents, a major seminary in Rome, and schools have been praying for Paul. Mother Angelica herself asked for prayers for him on her TV program, and even the Pope was personally asked to pray for him and was shown a picture of him. One convent of sisters has committed to maintain constant perpetual adoration until

Paul is fully conscious. Christendom College had perpetual adoration for him for the critical first few days. A Presbyterian minister has asked his congregation to pray for Paul. Finally, a Baptist Church is also praying for him. There is much, much more....

The parents said that: "*We should relate that for the two weeks prior to the accident Paul experienced singular growth in his spiritual life*."

Also, the severe shock that Paul experienced on three occasions after the accident could have caused some temporary or
permanent neurological damage. By now, the positive note was that Paul was now off the respirator, breathing entirely on his own and well enough so that his blood analysis was satisfactory.

His Toronto surgeon, had determined that the open abdomen could not be closed by bringing back together the two sides of the large incision (the open abdomen technique relieved the dangerous pressure on Paul's very swollen internal organs). The opening will be closed with extensive skin grafts from the back of Paul's upper leg and behind at a later time.

Overall though, Paul continued to improve. He was still breathing well through the tracheotomy and the respirator had remained off. Paul's response was gradually improving. Family friends Fr. Ted Colleton and Fr. Jim McManamy and Fr. Ralph Ponessa have visited Paul at Sunnybrook.

This first exciting family communication, about three weeks after the accident, was a lot of effort for Paul. He drifted in and out of sleep during the approximately one and a half hours that his family visited him (in two's and three's only, with breaks in between each group).

All antibiotics were discontinued, but a new concern was that he tested positive for vancomycin resistant enterocci (VRE) bacteria in his bowels, and was considered serious. VRE infections are resistant to most antibiotics, thus the medical staff was extra vigilant for any new infections that Paul might acquire, and were taking precautions to avoid spread of the bacteria to staff and other patients.

He will need speech therapy. In a few more months, physicians will attempt to reconstruct Paul's abdominal wall. All of this will not be completed for many months or even a few years. His left chest tube and the nasal stomach drain were also removed.
Paul started to move his head and arms, blink his eyes, and squeeze a person's hand in response to requests.

Paul has gone from being very bloated after the accident, to being very thin. He was fed by a tube into his stomach, and of course, his muscles have not been used for almost a month since the accident. That caused atrophy of the muscles that requires an amount of therapy to rehabilitate.

The family requested all to: "*Please continue prayers*."

Sunday April 1

His Mom and three youngest siblings, Joseph, Theresa, and Catherine, visited him. He really enjoyed the visit and silently mouthed (with great effort) the words "goodbye" and "I love you" to them when they left. Paul has

been disconnected from the feeding tube. Doctors have still not determined what has recently been causing him to expel food that was being provided by the intestinal feeding tube.

Monday April 2

Visits to Paul are being cut shorter by the hospital since he seemed to be having difficulty handling the emotional and mental stress of long visits. The general pattern seems to be that he is responsive and somewhat at peace for only a few periods of time each day.

Tuesday April 3

The right chest drain tube was finally removed. Those tubes (the left was removed earlier) had been very uncomfortable. His recent difficulty in retaining food may have been caused by an infection in the digestive system. He has been receiving an antibiotic again and the stomach (actually intestinal) feeding tube has been re-inserted. Paul is more prone to infections than other patients, thus requiring extra vigilance and more frequent antibiotics. This is because of the necessary removal of his spleen, which produces the body's natural antibodies against infection.

Later on, Paul experienced a few tremors and was much less responsive. This lower responsiveness was likely due to withdrawal from some of his medications. Paul awoke for some time again while his Mother was there for the afternoon. He was very listless and unable to move his arms, or respond in any manner.

Dr. Michael and Helen Rozeluk visited Paul this evening and prayed over him with the medal touched to the **kiss of Our Lady** in Garabandal.

Wednesday April 4, Changes Begin

Paul has now been wide-awake all day, which has not happened before, and which has been a huge change. Because of this, he was starting to more clearly understand the severity of his situation and needed a great deal of reassurance. It is overwhelming and frightening for him. It was also extremely frustrating because he must struggle very hard to break through the constant heavy mental fog or make the slightest physical movement. He was physically not capable of nodding his head more than slightly, lifting a hand several inches, or of saying even one word.

Canada's most famous pro-life priest, Fr. Ted Colleton, visited Paul again. After the visit, Paul made his first attempt to wave "goodbye" to a visitor. Paul's wonderful nurses placed him sitting in a chair for about 20 minutes for the first time (he has been lying down flat on his back since the accident on March 4). This was a harrowing experience for Paul. His heart rate zoomed as though he was on a roller coaster - one first, small step toward rehabilitation.

Thursday April 5

Well, well - it seems that Paul is much more "all there" than everyone thought. Paul started moving his hands around and became quite frustrated that no one understood what he wanted. His mother had the inspiration to ask if he wanted a pen and paper, and he emphatically nodded his head "yes!"

He was only able to write the letter "I" and a few scrawls and pushed the paper away in disgust. His mom then suggested that a marker might be better for writing. His brother John then had the inspiration to print a large alphabet and ask Paul to point to the letters one at a time. After a very shaky start, Paul got the hang of slowly pointing to one letter after another, and spelled out "BRING MARKER". Then after that he spelled out "I HEAR EVERY WORD." The family writes that: "*Now we know that during those times when he has been in apparent comas, unable to open his eyes or incapable of anything physical, he has been alert in his mind - at least for the past few days*."

Amazingly, Paul was able to slowly and shakily bring his hand up a few times to scratch his ear and rub his eye -- another first. Fr. Fernando Mignone was there at the time to encourage Paul and give him his blessing. Plastic surgeons have checked Paul's open wound and are now expecting to do skin grafting next week.

One's view of life and its frailty, and their priorities in daily life tend to considerably change after these experiences. So many of the things that seemed so important are really not that important. On the day that Paul was transferred from Fairfax, he said, "my whole attitude about life has changed because of this experience." Ditto. Being so utterly helpless, many of the families turn to the only thing that they can - prayer. In our case, the prayers of friends and families have been a very great help for Paul and us.

Friday April 6

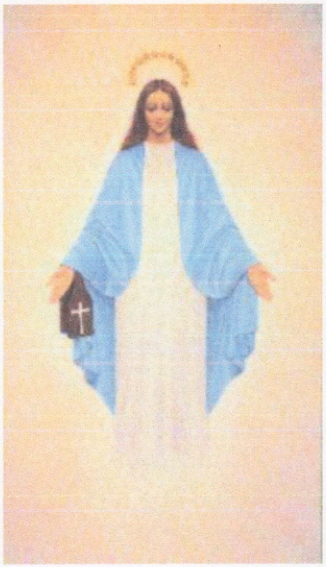
Paul continues to astound everyone with his rapid progress. Last night and today, he has been incredibly alert and is able to move his now thin arms, legs, and hands a great deal (although shakily and slowly, with a rest required every now and then). He greets everyone with a grateful, gentle handshake and follows comments, reading of letters, emails, and cards with interest. Paul asks questions or makes comments with sign language or by quickly pointing to a series of alphabet letters. He can now even use the remote control for the portable stereo that was bought for his room.

Last night and this afternoon hip-hop dance music was being played while Paul's brother, Luke, and friends Sean and Kelly were visiting. They were laughing for a long time, while Paul weakly performed traditional hip-hop dance hand motions, facial expressions, and even some of his leg motions while laying down in his critical care bed. Paul's sense of humor is sharp. Paul does not remember anything from the accident or his stay at Ivona Fairfax hospital, or even the flight to Canada. He does remember many things from just a day or so after he arrived in Toronto. He was shown some photos today of some of the happenings at the Ivona Fairfax hospital, and was very interested in these.

Dramatic Improvement

Why did Paul begin to improve so dramatically beginning this past Wednesday from his worrisome condition of the prior few days? Some would say that the drug withdrawal effects finally stopped at that time, and Paul began to follow a normal, quick recovery process.

But I think that it was because a few days before, Bonnie and I decided to follow up on friends' suggestions to ask Dr. Michael Rozeluk and his wife Helen to come and pray over Paul. They are a Ukrainian Catholic couple that is involved in a special ministry (The Workers of Our Lady - Canada) with strongly pro-life Ukrainian Catholic Bishop, Roman Danylak, who is now based in Rome . They asked Our Lady of Garabandal to intercede with Jesus for healing of the sick.



This past Tuesday night, Dr. Rozeluk, who himself was healed in Garabandal and his wife, together with Bonnie and I, offered some gentle, simple prayers for Paul in the hospital room. Bishop Danylak was praying for Paul at the same time while on a plane on his way to Rome. During the hour-long visit, Paul was in the semi-conscious state, with closed, shaking eyes, than he had been for the past few days. Dr. Rozeluk touched Paul with a medal containing a relic from Garabandal and rubbed some holy oil on Paul that was made just the day before by Bishop Danylak. The holy oil was made according to a strict ancient formula as specified in Old Testament scripture. ***And that was it--Paul's dramatic improvement began the very next day.*** Also, of course, many other people were praying for Paul, including those of various denominations.

Saturday April 7

Today has been quiet for Paul. This is the first day that his writing has been legible. His frequent flexing of his hands is paying off. Paul suddenly turned his stereo up high (with the all- powerful remote) while his mom was there. The nurse showed up shortly after and explained to his puzzled mom, "Oh, that means that he wants me." There isn't a buzzer system to call a nurse in critical care.

Monday April 9

Paul has almost finished reading a Louis L'Amour (western) novel since yesterday. That proves he has mentally come a long way back to his old self as Paul is a Louis L'Amour fanatic. Apparently he will be moved to the 5th floor later today or tomorrow. That means he will have officially "graduated" out of critical care into the next stage of his recovery.

Tuesday April 10

Paul has been moved out of critical care to the 5th floor of the hospital. He was in critical care for a total of 37 days in three different hospitals. Another milestone--yesterday Paul began to learn how to speak with the cap placed in his tracheotomy! Last night his parents heard his voice for a few minutes for the first time in five weeks, and Paul was greatly relieved to be able to begin speaking again! (those few minutes were quite emotional for everyone....)

Thursday April 12

Paul's tracheotomy was changed this morning and he will be allowed to talk with it tomorrow morning. Fr. Jim McManamy conducted a short Holy Thursday service for Paul this morning, and Paul was able to receive Holy Communion for the first time since his accident.

Good Friday April 13

Paul has been able to talk for the entire day! Talking with the new tracheotomy cap is difficult. Therefore Paul has been very tired for most of the day, and sleeps often as he attempts to endure it as long as possible. ... Fr. Jim came again and said a special Good Friday service for Paul and Michelle and gave Holy Communion to each of them.

A tube is still feeding Paul into his side. He has not had real food for 6 weeks. Today, he said, "I would love to

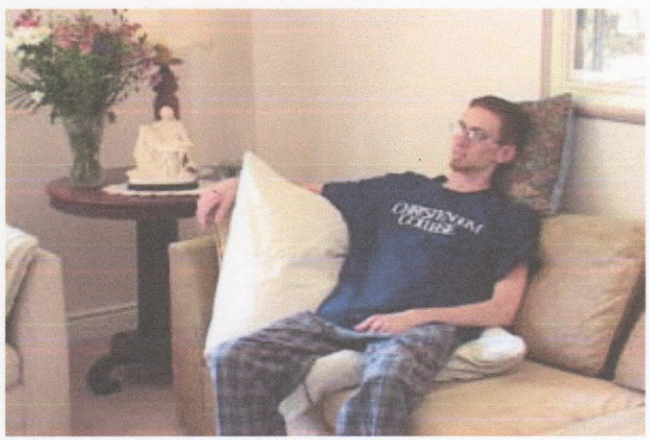
have a nice big, juicy hamburger" (influence of the TV he now has in his room). It will be some time yet for that, so friends charitably changed the subject.

Easter Sunday April 15

The entire Jalsevac family visited Paul today after the traditional family Easter egg hunt this morning (Easter vigil Mass was last night - Paul wished he could have attended). It is an especially moving Easter for the family this year, with much gratitude for God's many blessings. Some U.S. friends were shocked when they received a telephone call from him today. He has been recovering his speaking ability much better than anticipated.

Paul's primary physician says that Paul is advancing very well, and could possibly be out of the hospital and into a rehab facility in three weeks. Anywhere from six months to a year he will have more abdominal surgery that will require another hospital stay for about a week. But before that surgery occurs, Paul should be able to return to fairly normal life once he completes his rehabilitation (time unknown).

With the recent major improvements in Paul's condition, updates will be changed less frequently. The Jalsevacs once again thank all those who have prayed for Paul and have helped the family through this very difficult time. They especially thank God for His many blessings on Paul and on the entire family. We have gratefully learned first-hand the incredible power and comfort of prayer.



***NOTE:** On Saturday May 19, 2001 Paul Jalsevac was released from the hospital and allowed to go home.*

* * *

UPDATE SEPTEMBER 27, 2001

In July, 2001 for two Wednesdays the Jalsevac family attended the weekly healing masses that take place at the huge Transfiguration Slovak cathedral in nearby Markham. Bishop Roman Danylak and two other Eastern rite priests (Fr. John and Fr. Andrew) celebrated the mass and afterwards the bishop, the priests and Dr. Michael Rozeluk and his wife Helen prayed over everyone needing healing, especially invoking the intersession of Our Lady of Garabandal, as they did for Paul on April 3rd at Sunnybrook Hospital. The prayer community was delighted to receive Paul and his family who they had been praying for since April. The Jalsevacs found the very peaceful Wednesday evening services to be especially grace-filled and consoling and were grateful for the prayers and healing that Paul had received.

Then **confounding everyone's expectations, Paul has been back at Christendom College since September and is doing very well.** One of the doctors who had treated Paul, Dr. Benoit had arranged for Paul to be interviewed by the Washington Post on the Friday that he was originally scheduled to arrive back to school. The interview was to be for a story on the power of prayer in healing, which certainly applied to Paul's case. The interview did not take place because of the delay caused by Paul's kidney stone problem. Still, let it be known to all that prayer can, God willing, indeed play a major role in saving the lives of those who seem to be beyond physical hope.

The Jalsevac family headed home leaving Paul to continue his education within the impressive Christendom College community.

written by Steve Jalsevac, father
consent given by father to reproduce this story on Workers of Our Lady - Canada Website.
For full story see http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/paul/paul.html

Steve Jalsevac is the director of *LifeSite*, and a director of Campaign Life Coalition Canada. Paul himself was a youth pro-life lobbyist at the United Nations for Campaign Life, and was supposed to report for duty at the United Nations on the day of the accident. He has worked in the Toronto office of Campaign Life (John-Henry Westen, Editor, LifeSite News)