

Priest's faith-filled journey through cancer is inspiring thousands

Father John A. Moineau has been praying for a miracle, and thousands who are following his videos are praying for him and with him as he faces the difficulties of a treatable but incurable disease.

They're touched by his honesty about his fears and are inspired by his hope and trust in the Lord. For many, his journey has become theirs – not only in accompanying him, but also in the opportunity to face their own challenges.

“If you're a priest and you're suffering, and you tell them that you are suffering and scared, there's a real connection,” Father Moineau said. “I think that people can then be more authentic in sharing the process of their own suffering.”

Father Moineau (pronounced “mono”), 60, has been a priest in the Diocese of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, for 35 years. He's the pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Irwin and administrator of its partner parish, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in North Huntingdon. Last summer, he announced that the discomfort he was experiencing was stage 4 pancreatic cancer that had spread to tumors on his liver and caused a blood clot in his abdomen.

“There's no cure other than a miracle,” he told Our Sunday Visitor. “The doctors are being upfront with that reality. How I respond to treatment will determine how long I will be in remission and how long I will be on the maintenance of chemotherapy, unless the Lord decides different.”

'God has a divine plan'

When COVID-19 closed his parishes, he posted videos, lessons and Masses to reach out to his parishioners. So the venue, Operation Safe Mode, was already in place when he shared the bad news in July and continued with updates.

If there were to be any miracle, Father Moineau said in one posting, it would not be like Christ changing water to wine in an instant. Rather, it would come in increments, if it came at all.

"I truly believe my miracle will come," he said during one of his early video updates. "But we have to examine what we expect when we pray."

Father Moineau has never lost hope through the difficult journey. Chemotherapy treatments made him sick and wiped him out for days. Yet he continued with his pastoral ministries and encouraged others to take up their crosses to share in the suffering of Christ.

"Before I was diagnosed, I was praying, 'How am I going to get people to start praying again?'" he said.

People responded every time he posted a video. He encouraged them to pray the sorrowful mysteries in a new way, with the Divine Mercy prayers between the decades of the Rosary. It's a way, he explained, to remember all those who are in most need of God's mercy.

"Whether it was the suffering, the side effects of treatment, the fear and anxiety, God has a divine plan through prayer," Father Moineau said. "Some people say, 'Why even pray then?' God does want to hear our voices. He wants to have that relationship with us. What God wants to give us is bigger and more important. God has a plan for us, and his plan will be one that we will be proud to be part of."

'Not journeying alone'

Publicly facing his illness has been an ongoing testimony that strikes a chord for so many. Thousands of people have watched and shared Father Moineau's [videos](#), with one post getting more than 10,000 views. Children write notes to him, and people in the community have organized events to support him.

He has received prayerful messages and words of encouragement from people of all ages, from near and far, classmates from his early school days and through seminary, many from other churches and denominations. Some ask for his prayers as they face their own difficulties.

"I'm really happy that I'm not journeying alone and that I have courage that I received from the Holy Spirit," Father Moineau said. "The brevity of life is right before everyone. When they watch me on the videos, they realize the fragility of life. It's brief. Whether I live to be 60 or 70 or 90, life is still brief."

Facing his own vulnerability, he said, was "a new kind of opportunity" to reflect on his own life that, through the busy duties of priesthood, focused on the salvation of others. For years, he prayed that God would give him five years at the end of his life "to save my own soul," he said. "I do not fear death at all."

'Praising God'

Father Moineau received encouraging news at the end of December. There were signs of progress in beating back the cancer. Then came the long-awaited announcement that everyone has been praying for. On Jan. 7, he shared the good news that he said was "better than I could have imagined."

There were no suspicious tumors or lesions in his chest, abdomen or pelvis, and the two in the liver and one in the

pancreas had continued to shrink. The most important news, he added, was that another tumor in the pancreas had completely resolved.

“That tumor is gone,” he said. “That’s significant, and the pancreas isn’t really creating any new cancer cells.”

There was even better news in late February, a follow-up to a posting a couple of weeks before that.

“The past 10 to 15 days have been amazing,” Father Moineau said in his video. He had completed 15 rounds of chemotherapy, was exercising regularly and had walked two miles. He was being weaned off of pain medication as well.

His latest video update, posted April 11, continued to be encouraging. The three-month scan showed that the cancerous tumors in the liver continued to shrink, and there were no metastases. Treatments will continue.

Father Moineau, whose videos can be found at [his parish’s website](#) and by searching for his name on [YouTube](#), thanked everyone for their constant prayers and added: “Remember, there are other people, too – your friends and family – who need that kind of love as well. Please extend it to them as well as to me.”

“It’s great to feel this good, and it’s hard for me to believe that I am that far along,” he said. “But I really know it’s true. It’s a miracle. I am praising God and his glory for taking away this pain and moving forward, and I thank you for the prayers of getting me through this.”

Maryann Gogniat Eidemiller writes from Pennsylvania.

A PRAYER FOR GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the gift of our
priests.

Through them, we experience your presence in the sacraments.

Help our priests to be strong in their vocation.

Set their souls on fire with love for your people.

Grant them the wisdom, understanding, and strength they need
to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Inspire them with the vision of your Kingdom.

Give them the words they need to spread the Gospel.

Allow them to experience joy in their ministry.

Help them to become instruments of your divine grace.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns as our
Eternal Priest.

Amen.

Source: USCCB.org