

Do you believe in miracles? Can extraordinary things happen to ordinary people?
Have you ever prayed or asked for a miracle?

So often we hear about someone who is dying of cancer or some other disease,
and we say aloud "I am praying for a miracle".

Many things in life cause us to mention miracles.

- it will take a miracle for him to graduate from high school
- With all her boyfriends it will be miraculous if she doesn't get pregnant
- it will be a miracle if my car starts this morning

The word "miracle" is so overused today. How many miracle skin creams are on
TV? How many times do we pray for the miracle of the "hail Mary pass" during a
football game?

Hey, we even had a miracle in the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid, NY where the
underdog USA hockey team beat the Russians, everyone called it the Miracle on
Ice!

But exactly what is a miracle?

Miracle comes from Latin miraculum, meaning "object of wonder"; its ultimate
root meant "to smile upon." To smile upon, Remember that.

Scholars state that a miracle is

"An event manifesting as to be the work of God"

Its "A wonder, a marvel."

It is "An extraordinary event in the physical world that surpasses all known human or natural powers and is said to be supernatural." Supernatural.

S. Parkes Cadman says "We can see a thousand miracles around us every day. What is more supernatural than an egg yolk turning into a chicken?"

Katherine Anne Porter states that "Miracles are spontaneous, they cannot be summoned, but come of themselves"

There is one thing you need to know about miracles for they ALL have one thing in common – they begin with a problem.

Can you think of one miracle that didn't occur because of a problem?
Think of stories the Bible.

Lazarus, he was dead, a major problem there.
And the blind man? Well lets see..

How many of you here today have a problem? For some wives out there, your problem may be sitting right next to you.

The truth is.... I have problems, you have problems, we all have problems ... every day of our lives.

However, sometimes our problems DO need a miracle.

I want to tell you about woman I know.

She was a very successful business woman.

Director of Marketing for an oil company, served on several Board of Directors, played every charity and chamber of commerce golf tournament and she was good, had an 18 handicap, had lots of golf trophies.

She was happy, had a nice home with her soulmate, traveled around the world. She loved life. She was happy. Until one morning she woke up and discovered that overnight she had been struck with a disease, an uncommon form of dystrophy.

It was debilitating, progressive, degenerative, extremely painful, and there was no cure.

Her life was shattered. Within weeks she was in a wheelchair.
No more golf trophies.

She was on a barrage of medications which made her sleepy and caused her difficulty in retrieving words.
No more Board of Directors.

Her days were spent going to an advance pain center. She had to lay perfectly still while an anesthesiologist advanced a needle into her back and down into her left leg which was swollen and extremely painful and sensitive to the touch.

Many times the dr would hit a nerve or two causing her body to spasm with pain and she would scream out. This nerve block was to ease the pain. But it didn't.

EVERY month she had to go through this traumatic procedure.

She could no longer drive a car. She could hardly walk and had to be pushed in a wheelchair. She had a morphine bag around her waist that automatically injected the medicine at certain intervals through a very thin wire catheter that went through her back, down to her leg.

Finally, after 8 months, the disease settled down and allowed her to have a life again and walk again.

She and her partner moved to Florida to be closer to her family. My friend was walking through swamps and nature trails, working again, this time as a Director of Marketing for a large development company.

She had pain, but it was manageable with the help of some pain medication. The sun was shining, she traveled again, life was good.

One morning she awoke in extreme pain. The disease was raising its wicked head. The neurologist tried nerve blocks. But they were useless. He tried a pacemaker-like device that was supposed to interrupt pain signals from reaching her the brain. It didn't work.

Her Dr. added more meds to help with pain. Many of these meds had side effects, one being depression. The pills, the inability to walk and being back in a wheelchair again was taking its toll on this woman.

She was suicidal, slept all the time, and took her tier 5 narcotics for pain. She was taking 18 different pills a day. Her pain increased and her Dr gave her more narcotics.

Life at home was crumbling. Her partner couldn't take it any more. After 32 years their life together ended.

She left the bed she had shared with her partner for over half her life and moved into the guest room. Soon, the house sold and in 5 weeks they would go there separate ways and start a new life apart.

Unknown to anybody, she had other plans. She had no life. She was a depressed invalid and had no reason to live. When her partner left the house for work she started working on her plan.

She wrote suicide letters to her friends and family, packed "express overnight" mailboxes with possessions she knew her friends would like. She hid the boxes in her suitcase.

Now she needed a gun. She had been looking on the computer for days, researching the best way to commit suicide with a gun. The Internet showed her 2 options: side of the head or under the chin.

The computer screen showed what angle to hold the gun at and what kind of bullets to use. At the gun store she filled out the application. Questions asked, "do you have depression, been treated for mental illness, or been hospitalized for mental illness."

She knew the answers to all those questions were yes. It was a felony to lie. But she was going to kill herself, so she didn't care if she lied. She wrote "no" and signed the gun application.

Three days later she had a Smith and Wesson. She purchased 6 bullets that exploded on impact to cause the most damage. That is what the Internet recommended.

The day came to leave Florida. She told everyone she was going north to stay with relatives. Her family was glad she had a place to go. No one knew her true plans.

She was going to Gettysburg Pennsylvania, a battlefield she always wanted to visit.....that is where she would end her life.

Because she could hardly drive, she took the auto train to Washington DC. Then would drive the short distance to Gettysburg.

She had booked a private car tour of the battlefield with a park ranger so she could see where the 20th Infantry Maine Monument was located. She would go back in the evening and shoot herself at that monument.

From DC, it was an hour and forty minute drive on interstate 795 to the battlefield. She would arrive mid day, check into the hotel, take the tour, and bring the express mail boxes to the post office.

At dark, she would leave for the historic site and die.

On the morning she was to leave Washington, she found she was tired and her legs were cramping and the pain was terrible. She was afraid she might fall asleep on the highway and kill someone.

Though she didn't mind dying, she certainly didn't want to kill someone else.

So she changed her route, deciding to take a small country road to Gettysburg. If she was sleepy, she could just pull over and rest.

After some time on the country road, my friend came to Mount St. Mary's University. A sign advertised "The National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, the oldest known replica of the revered French shrine".

If you don't know of the Grotto in Lourdes, France, that is where a young girl named Bernadette saw visions of Mary, Mother of Jesus. Healings took place there. Bernadette later became a Saint.

My friend turned her vehicle down the road to the "grotto". Because you see, she was Catholic. In the Catholic Church you have to take the name of a Saint for your confirmation. She loved the story of Bernadette and of her seeing Mary in the grotto. So at age 12, she took the name Bernadette for her confirmation name.

A volunteer at the Grotto's visitor center pushed her in her wheelchair along the peaceful walkway through the woods to a small cave. There it was, a statue of Bernadette kneeling on the grass, praying to Mary.

The most beautiful statue of Mary was inside the grotto, surrounded by candles. Pilgrims were kneeling and praying, some were kissing a stone embedded in the wall of the grotto. It was a stone from the actual grotto in Lourdes, France.

My friend wept at the site. The volunteer lifted her from the wheelchair so she could kiss the stone. She stayed an hour just looking at the sky, the grotto and statues.

She then continued her journey to Gettysburg.

Further up the country road, she came across a sign announcing the "Basilica of St Elizabeth Ann Seton". My friend was born at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Hospital. She turned her car towards the Basilica.

It was Tuesday, the only day the Basilica didn't have a noon mass and offered no tours. However, young woman greeted her. She was deaf, but could read lips. She offered to push her in her wheelchair and show her around the Basilica.

She stopped the wheelchair in front of the tomb of Elizabeth. A wooden cross was stationed in front of the sarcophagus. The cross contained a small glass medallion in which there was a piece of skin. She told my friend that it was a piece of skin of St. Elizabeth Seton.

It is called a relic. They are very valuable and only given by the pope to cardinals, bishops, etc. They cannot be sold. My friend looked up from her wheelchair and told the guide that she had a relic. It was a piece of skin of St. Raphia of Lebanon.

The tour guide asked how she got the relic. The patriarch of Lebanon had given it to her years before when she was very sick. The guide said "for the Patriarch of the Maronite Rite to give you a relic was a tremendous honor".

Afterwards this woman was back in her car and continued her journey to Gettysburg in time for her private tour.

A ranger got in her vehicle and drove her around the battlefield pointing out the historic sites. Soon they were at the monument she wanted to see, the Maine Monument.

After the tour she went to the hotel. She was tired, in tremendous pain and had to rest. She had two hours before she needed to leave for the post office to mail her boxes.

Exhausted, she laid down. But the pain was too much and she couldn't get comfortable.

She got up and got the gun and bullets. Since she couldn't sleep she figured she mind as well get prepared. She placed the loaded gun on the nightstand and laid down again.

She thought of Bernadette of Lourdes. Her confirmation name was Bernadette.

She thought of St Elizabeth Seton. She was born at St Elizabeth Seton Hospital.

She thought of the relic given to her by the Maronite Patriarch.

That relic was now in a box along with a suicide note addressed to her Aunt and Uncle.

She had mapped out her route to take the highway from DC to Gettysburg. But that morning at the last minute she changed her mind and took a small country road.

Unexpectedly, she filled up with tears and sobbed uncontrollably. She reached for the phone and dialed a Plattsburgh, NY number.

"I am in trouble", she said.

"I know you are" replied her Aunt. "I know in my heart you have a gun. Go put it in the closet, try to rest and tomorrow you get in the car and come to Plattsburgh.

She did.

What would have happened if she had taken the fast way, the turnpike? Often we rush around and try to do things quickly.

We don't take the small, slow road where we might see miracles along the way.

Miracle. Remember that the root means...to smile upon.

Was this woman smiled upon? Was it a miracle?

You decide.

This woman's name?

It's me, Kendra Lee Ann Bernadette Maroon.

Being here today, alive and back with my partner Dawna....I believe in miracles.