



Reflections

The Power of Prayer

AN important offspring of Christians Together in Okehampton is the prayer group, which I believe is a lifeline for the town.

It was huge motivator for me to start a Divine Mercy prayer group at St Boniface.

Like many others in the parish, I consider this prayer group to be the most important of all groups, since it forms the basis of everything we do in the parish.

I recently had a moving experience with the power of prayer, which I would like to share here.

On January 8, after a hectic academic weekend in London, I had to take a last-minute flight to India as my father was given only 48 hours to live by medical professionals.

Although, against all their predictions, he is still with us as I write, it is heartbreaking to see him struggle between life and death.

In this helpless distress, prayer is the one thing that has been comforting to me and to my family. Everyone who has come to visit has said prayers — some loudly

and a few quietly — in my Dad's presence and assured us they would continue to pray for him.

I personally felt positive vibrations of strength amidst all the suffering I witnessed in my father.

As a psychologist I have studied neuroscience theoretically, yet this was the first time I experienced practically the theory in action.

Loud prayer, using words rather than visualisation techniques, is mostly used in meditation as it activates the prefrontal cortex of the brain — the region responsible for wilful behaviour, executive

functions and decision-making.

I am not sure if my father could hear what was being said but I was certain he was responding as he made the sign of the cross many times — so much so that he blessed our archbishop in return for the archbishop's blessing and prayers over him!

I was also aware of the implicit non-verbal communication between right brain to right brain, which means that silent prayers in the presence of others could evoke powerful emotions in the person prayed for. I knew my father was

making responses to such prayers too.

Whether said loudly or silently, prayer is one of the scientifically proven healthy treatments for body and spirit that doesn't have any bad side effects. All it takes is little bit of effort and lots of goodwill.

'The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth and prayer' (*Psalms 145:18*).

Darline Joseph Marianathan
St Boniface, Okehampton and
Holy Family,
Chagford