

The Southampton Press

January 7, 2021

CANCER JOURNEYS

A Twice-a-month column from
Fighting Chance

Angel on My Shoulder



Diagnosis

Emotional Impact

Treatment/Side Effects

Survivorship

Patient Stories

Teach Me to Pray

At Fighting Chance, we try to provide patients, who receive our free counseling services, every possible tool to empower them in their battle against cancer - - to give them a real fighting chance.

After a patient has had a couple of sessions with our counselor, the talk often turns to religion. Many patients confess that they have not been in a house of worship for decades. But a cancer diagnosis - - and the very real prospect of death - - leads patients to start exploring what a spiritual life might involve.

Perhaps the patients' most common question is: "Can someone teach me to pray?" That is not something we do at Fighting Chance. But, just a little further down the road from our Bay Street office in Sag Harbor, is the Cormaria Retreat House, run by Sister Ann Marino for the past 50 years.

We have suggested, time and again, that patients seeking a prayerful life drop in to visit Sister Ann. They often do.

Can learning to pray really be helpful? Well, I have a sweet memory of a patient named Susie - - who came for counseling in 2007.

Susie and Sister Ann

I would occasionally run into Susie at our office and found she loved to talk. Before long, we became friendly. She wanted to learn to pray and told me she planned to follow our suggestion to visit Cormaria.



The next time I saw her, it was summertime, and Susie told me she had seen Sister Ann on numerous occasions, while also continuing counseling at Fighting Chance. I asked if her visits to the Retreat House had been helpful.

Susie finds her Angel

She brightened at the question, and with a beautiful smile, said, "I've learned how to pray and now I know there's an angel on my shoulder." She then asked "Can you see it?"

I said I couldn't, but asked her how she felt about the angel. She replied simply, "It makes me feel stronger."

Angel in the Snow

Months passed and the next time I saw Susie it was just before Christmas.

There was a garden outside the Fighting Chance office that was planted by our patients, and on that cold winter day, the garden was covered with snow.

Susie grabbed me by the hand, took me outside to see the garden, and asked, "Notice anything different?"

Sitting there was a small plaster angel perched in the pure white snow.

"It's my gift to Fighting Chance for all of your help."

I asked Susie if there was anything special about the figurine.

And she replied, "It reminds me of the Angel on my shoulder."

*Fighting Chance has offices in
Sag Harbor and at the
Phillips Family Cancer Center
in Southampton.*

*For more details, or information
please call 631 725 4646.*

*Visit our website at
www.fightingchance.org*