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Vatican investigates miracle in St. Louis

by [Maggie Crane](#)

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A St. Louis girl somehow survived a rare and deadly cancer. Doctors can't even explain how she is alive today, and now the Vatican is investigating her case as a possible miracle.

News-4's Maggie Crane explains how it happened.

Rachel's Story:

Rachel Baumgartner Lozano was diagnosed with a rare and deadly cancer during her sophomore year in high school. It was 1998, and chances of beating the tumor growing on her spine were slim.

"It was shutting down my body," Lozano says. "I had to have emergency surgery. Then I went through a year of chemo and radiation."

That killed the cancer, but it came back -- with a vengeance.

"I had a life-threatening bone marrow transplant that I almost didn't survive, and then about a year and a half after that, (the cancer) came back between my heart, lung and spine," Lozano says.

This third recurrence was bad news. The cancer was in a spot too dicey to operate. Two years went by. Doctors managed her pain but knew she was terminal.

"In both cases, when a patient has a recurrence, survival is typically measured in days to weeks," Dr. Robert Bergamini, Director of Oncology and Hematology at St. John's Mercy Children's Hospital, says. Dr. Bergamini treated Lozano throughout her bout with cancer and continues as her doctor today.

Rachel was beating the odds -- hanging on, even while the cancer grew again.

"I just wanted to do something each day that meant something to me, whether it was talking on the phone to a friend, reading a book, going on a trip," Lozano says of those days. "I just wanted to do something each day that was meaningful, so that if it was my last day then I wouldn't be regretful about anything."

Finally, the decision came to operate -- the last resort to try to save the then 21-year-old girl.

"(The surgeon) took out a tumor the size of a small football and sent the whole thing off - in tact -- to the pathologist," Dr. Bergamini says. "And two days later, the pathologist called and said 'this is all scar tissue.' And it was just 'do you have the right patient?!' I said, 'what do you mean it's all scar tissue?' He said 'it's all scar tissue, it's dead.'"

What doctors had tested and were sure was cancer, suddenly was not. And that is what the Vatican is investigating as a possible miracle.

"Medically, you just kind of go this shouldn't have happened," Dr. Bergamini says.

In 27 years and hundreds of patients, Dr. Bergamini has never seen a success story quite like Rachel's.

"I define a miracle as something that is unexplainable by common medical practice -- accepted medical practice -- and Rachel certainly falls into that category," Dr. Bergamini says.

And that makes Rachel wonder if prayer and a certain priest played just as big of a role as modern medicine. Daily, she asked Blessed Chaminade, a founder of the Marianist Order, to intercede on her behalf -- to cure her of the deadly cancer.

"That energy was so important to keep me going, and it was one of the only things that gave me hope too," Lozano says.

Rachel and her doctors have spent six years testifying in what amounts to a Catholic court case, proving that modern medicine alone didn't cure her. The Pope will ultimately decide if Chaminade should become a saint. If the Pope agrees Rachel's cure is miraculous, it would be only the second miracle in the Catholic Church from St. Louis. The last one happened in 1886, making it hard to overestimate what that would mean not only to the St. Louis faithful, but to Rachel.

"I still think I'm a miracle either way!" she says.

What happens next:

Friday night, Vatican investigators will officially close Rachel's case during a 7 p.m. prayer ceremony at Our Lady of the Pillar -- Rachel's church. Then, the miracle investigation goes to Rome where yet another panel will review the case. If it passes the panel, the case gets sent to the Pope for review. His decision could take months or even several years.

What Rachel is up to now:

Rachel married Gabe Lozano and continues to use art as her own form of therapy. Her work is gaining recognition around St. Louis. She just had her first gallery showing. Rachel is studying to get her Masters in art therapy and counseling -- two things that helped her get through her battle. Rachel is also an inspirational speaker -- both locally and nationally.

Saintly stuff:

The last certified miracle to be performed in St. Louis happened at the Shrine of St. Joseph in 1886. The miracle led to Blessed Peter Claver becoming a saint. According to the Missionary Sisters of St. Peter Claver, the saint healed a dying man after that man prayed to Blessed Claver and kissed a relic of him.

Here are the steps necessary to becoming a saint:

Servant of God: A diocese, parish or organization asks the bishop to open an investigation. The Vatican grants that person title of "servant of God." The diocesan tribunal hears witnesses and testimony on heroic Christian virtues. So, the term "Servant of God" describes someone at this stage in the process.

Venerable: The postulator presents acts and documents to the Congregation of Causes of Saints in Rome. After favorable judgment and papal approval, the candidate is declared "Venerable."

Blessed: After a miracle attributed to the intercession of the "Venerable" has been investigated and accepted, the pope decides on beatification. The Venerable is now titled "Blessed."

Saint: After a second miracle is attributed to the intercession of the "Blessed," the pope may then declare the Blessed a "Saint."

Maggie's story:

News-4's Maggie Crane was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease in 1999. She was a

junior in high school at Francis Howell North in St. Charles. She endured eight months of chemotherapy and was considered cured five years later when the cancer never returned. Maggie was also treated by Dr. Bergamini and Dr. Robert Hanson, both at St. John's Mercy Children's Hospital. Maggie is happy to report that she has been cancer-free for 10 years!

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by [Maggie Crane](#)

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Was a St. Louis girl saved by a miracle? Doctors say they don't know how she survived a rare and deadly cancer.

"It came back between my heart, lung and spine, and based on statistics, I had a 0-percent chance of making it," Rachel Lozano says. "No one had ever survived after a bone marrow transplant with my type of cancer."

But she did. Six years later, Rachel is cancer free. Now, the Vatican is investigating her case as a miracle.

During years of chemotherapy, radiation and surgeries, Rachel prayed to Blessed Chaminade. He was a French priest who was persecuted during the French Revolution. He also founder of the Marianist Order.

Friday on Awake with News-4, Maggie Crane tells us Rachel's story. Hear why even doctors say she shouldn't be alive today.