

A Personal Reflection



Richard Muench, a cradle Catholic and a longtime resident of Forest Glen, father of six, grandfather of 14, and great grandfather of 15. He and his wife Arlene recently celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. He was regularly taking bicycle rides and walks around the neighborhood. In retirement, he was active with various pursuits including service on the St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish Pastoral Council. Then, in the fall of 2023, Richard was diagnosed with cancer. Here is his deeply personal reflection about what followed.

I saw two experts for my next action steps to overcome this disease. Both agreed that my history of good health through 91 years pointed toward infusion – a method giving me Opdivo, a medicine to strengthen my own system to fight back.

This plan, for me, was wrong! I ended up for three months in the intensive care unit (ICU) at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, which was selected as the best place for me to recover.

Ninety days in the ICU is a long time, and while there, I got to know Jesus, my Lord and my God. Many nights, around 3:00 or 4:00 a.m., I talked with Him about the “why?”

Early in this drama, as my memory left me, when I talked to Jesus, I forgot my prayers, including the Our Father, Hail Mary, and even “Jesus, I trust in You.” Finally, I could remember only one word, “Jesus.” I kept saying it at night. After some length of time, my memory returned, including all the prayers I had known but had forgotten.

The next step after Northwestern Hospital was a trip to a rehab center in Northbrook, where I spent seven months to learn how to breathe on my own, walk, and eat.

Now I’m back home with my wife, Arlene, and family. I am at about 70-80% capacity. There are many actions I can no longer perform and require help. But there are many I can do, and I do them.

But Jesus is still with me and I can say the whole Rosary from memory.

Remember: Jesus is with us, for us, and in us – ALWAYS.

And I sincerely thank all who sent me well wishes, prayed for me, visited me, and expressed concern about my health.

Richard Muench