

They say miracles don't happen

Brian Roberts

I have always been very sceptical when it comes to believing in miracles, but sometimes you witness something that cannot be explained no matter what rational or irrational thought process are put into place. We all believe without question the miracles recorded in the New Testament even without tangible proof. History is littered with events and actions of persons which defy human logic. Perhaps that is why they fascinate us so much just because we cannot attach logic and reason. Of course some are fabricated or exaggerated versions of events which were supposed to have taken place but when you can see what is described as a miracle with your own eyes or even touch it, your consciousness is taken to a new level.

A few years ago Kate and I were in Santa Fe New Mexico and made a visit to the Loretto Chapel in the centre of the city. I had heard about a miracle that was supposed to have happened there, but what we saw took our breath away.

In 1872 Jean Batiste Lamy, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Santa Fe commissioned the building of a convent to be named "Our Lady of the Light Chapel". It was designed in the Gothic revival style. Unfortunately the architect died suddenly and it was then that the builders found a major design fault. There was no access to the choir stalls 22 feet above the floor. Experienced carpenters were brought in to design a staircase but all conceded that it could not be done and the only way to climb up was by ladder.

When the chapel was completed it was put in the care of the Sisters of Loretto as an academy.

For many years the sisters were forced to climb a ladder to the choir stall. Seeking divine guidance the sisters made a novena to their patron saint St Joseph the Carpenter.

Legend has it that on the ninth and final day of the novena a mysterious carpenter arrived at the Chapel and offered to build a staircase but with a condition that the church must be locked while he

was working and no one was to enter. The carpenter who arrived on a donkey was only equipped with basic tools - a saw, a carpenter's square, a hammer and tubs for soaking the wood.

The sisters agreed and he got to work. The chapel doors were bolted from inside and the sisters complied by the agreement.

No sound was heard from the chapel and no one entered or left the building. No deliveries were made of materials. Even to the Sisters this incident was totally bizarre.

A few weeks later the Sisters had not heard or seen the carpenter and so they entered the Chapel. What they found brought them to their knees.



IL-MELLIEĦA

To the Sisters the novena had worked. The inside of the Chapel had been completely renovated.

A miraculous staircase consisting of 33 steps in two full 360 degree turns had been built. There was no centre support, nor was it held from the sides. There were no nails used, only wooden pegs and there were no joints to be found. The wood did not come from New Mexico and the greatest mystery of all was that the Carpenter had disappeared without seeking any payment.

Since then, many experts had studied the structure and all came to the same conclusion that whoever the mysterious carpenter was, he was a genius.

The Sisters believed that he was St Joseph himself sent by Jesus to help them.

Whatever the truth, the beautiful staircase in Loretto Chapel cannot be explained in any rational way. It is a work of art in many ways greater than those of the greatest artists and designers.

To the Sisters of Loretto Chapel it is a miracle both in the identity of the Carpenter and the physics of the construction and who are we to argue. Even I have to admit there is no other explanation.

Today the Chapel is only used for special occasions such as weddings but the miraculous staircase of Loretto Chapel is there for all to wonder on.



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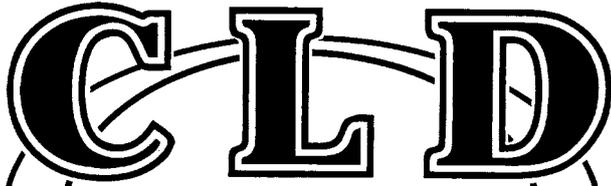
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