

United States: Dying Boy Gives to VOM

Fourteen-year-old Philip “Phil” Parks’s life may have been cut short by cancer, but his bold faith — which only grew stronger as he confronted death — continues to help persecuted Christians today.

During his battle with stage 4 glioblastoma, a rare and aggressive brain cancer, Phil used his God-given artistic talents to create greeting cards, which he sold online. The front of the cards feature his drawing of a cardinal — a symbol of hope during his cancer fight.

Days before he slipped into a coma and subsequently died on April 13, 2016, Phil told his mother he wanted the profits from his greeting card sales to be given to The Voice of the Martyrs.

“He once told me that he was thankful for brain cancer because it was enabling him to share Christ with more people,” Phil’s mother, Lydia Parks, wrote in a letter to VOM. “He then told me that martyrs have suffered much more for their faith, and that he had it ‘much easier.’”

Phil shared this with his mother after he had been told his cancer had progressed and had become terminal. He heard this news after he had endured several surgeries, chemotherapy, and dozens of rounds of radiation therapy and cell treatment. Through it all, he held onto hope, joy, love and faith.

“I know this was God’s miracle of many earnest prayers for him, and I also believe that the hope, faith and strength displayed by his persecuted brethren further sustained him,” his mother said.



Phil had long been inspired by the stories of enduring faith in the face of fear from our persecuted brothers and sisters around the

world.

“He had grown up hearing stories from (VOM’s) newsletters and ‘Jesus Freaks,’” Lydia said in her letter. “We also wrote letters to our persecuted brethren, made parachutes and prayed specifically for those written about, as a family (myself and four sons). My boys often watched every ‘Torchlighters’ movie, as well. I believe this established a foundation of trust in a Father who ‘would never leave nor forsake them.’”

Eight months before he died, Phil wrote his last letter to a persecuted Christian in prison. In the letter, he encouraged **Farshid Fathi**, who had been imprisoned in Iran, and told him he had been praying for him. He also wrote, “I’ve been scared of dying and don’t want to die but I have trusted in God to give me hope; and He has.” He signed the letter, “Your friend, Philip.”

Authorities released Farshid four months later, on Dec. 21, 2015, after spending nearly five years in prison.

When he needed it most, God gave Phil hope in the form of a cardinal. During one of his worst days in his cancer battle, Phil struggled with fear as he faced the reality of death. His mother encouraged him to pray for God’s peace. Phil went outside to pray and soon returned joyful.

“He came to me and said, ‘I prayed that God would show me that He is near through one of his creatures. And then, I thought of a red cardinal. When I opened my eyes, a cardinal flew down and stayed with me,’” Lydia told her church’s newspaper. “He told me that he knew God was with him. He wasn’t afraid to die.”

Today Lydia’s house is covered with cardinals, which she feels God continues to use to give her and her other sons hope.

“He died on a beautiful day,” she said, remembering Phil. “The sun was coming up, and there wasn’t a cloud in the sky. There were cardinals on the tree in our front yard.”

Even though Lydia misses her son terribly, she continues to remember his bold faith.

“He said he knew God gave him cancer for a reason,” she added.

To purchase Phil’s notecards, the proceeds of which support VOM, visit www.philparks.com.

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