NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Vatican medical experts OK reported miracle attributed to archbishop

Catholic News Service | Mar. 6, 2014

A seven-member team of medical experts convoked by the Vatican reported there is no natural explanation for the survival of a child delivered stillborn and whose heart did not start beating until 61 minutes after his birth.

The survival of the child, James Fulton Engstrom, now 3 years old and developing normally, was credited by his parents to a miracle attributable to the intercession of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, a Peoria, Ill., diocesan priest who gained fame for his 1950s television show "Life Is Worth Living" and his 16 years at the helm of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

The medical experts' report was announced March 6 in Peoria by the Archbishop Fulton Sheen Foundation, which is headed by Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria.

"Today is a significant step in the cause for the beatification and canonization of our beloved Fulton Sheen," Jenky said in a statement. "There are many more steps ahead and more prayers are needed. But today is a good reason to rejoice."

James' mother, Bonnie Engstrom, described what happened when she addressed a 2012 gathering of the Midwest region of the Catholic Press Association in Peoria.

When Engstrom was pregnant with James, a feeling came over her that "God wants this baby to exist," she said. "Maybe he's going to be the pope. We didn't know, but we were shooting high."

During delivery, what caused James to be stillborn was that his umbilical cord had knotted itself, cutting off his blood flow and oxygen supply. The more he progressed through the birth canal, the tighter the knot became. "He was born stillborn," Engstrom said, remembering how "his arms flopped by his side" when she reached for him to hold him.

Others at the home birth did CPR and chest compressions for 20 minutes waiting for an ambulance to arrive. Engstrom said she had no pre-composed prayer asking for help from Sheen. "I just kept repeating his name over and over in my head: Fulton Sheen, Fulton Sheen, Fulton Sheen," she recounted. "I didn't know what else to do."

At the hospital, James was described as "PEA," for "pulseless electrical activity." Medics tried two injections of epinephrine. Neither worked. A nurse held one of James' feet in an effort to give him some measure of comfort, and Engstrom said she remarked later, "It was so cold, it was so cold. It was like in the saying 'cold and dead.'"

Engstrom remembered that a doctor in the emergency room said, "We'll try for five more minutes, then call it," meaning recording the time of death. "If he had known about the previous 40 minutes" of efforts to revive him before arriving at the hospital, she said, "he would have just called it."

She added, "They were just about to call it when his heart started beating -- 148 beats per minute, which is healthy for a newborn. And it never faltered."

The case will next be reviewed by a board of theologians. With their approval, the case could move on to the cardinals and bishops who advise the pope on these matters. Finally, the miracle would be presented to Pope Francis, who would then officially affirm that God performed a miracle through the intercession of Sheen. There is no timeline as to when these next steps might take place.

If the Engstrom case is authenticated as a miracle, Sheen would be beatified, elevating from "venerable" to "blessed." A beatification ceremony could conceivably take place in Peoria, according to the foundation, which promotes his sainthood cause. In general, a second miracle would need to be authenticated for canonization.

Source URL (retrieved on *08/20/2014 - 23:02*): http://ncronline.org/news/people/vatican-medical-experts-ok-reported-miracle-attributed-archbishop