

The word 'miracle' has been used in many different ways.

It has been used to describe the 1980 U.S. Olympic Team's victory over a super Russian team.

Miracle has been used for movies that have a wonderful charm about them such as "Miracle on 34th Street." Or another movie based on an H.G. Wells' story: "The Man Who Could Work Miracles." This film was made in 1937 and starred Roland Young who, at one time, also starred in the role of "Topper" on television.

"The Man Who Could Work Miracles" is about a man in England, George Fotheringay, who has been given special powers without him really knowing it. One evening he goes to his favorite pub, "The Long Dragon Inn" and... well let's see what happens.

(SHOW VIDEO CLIP)

You'll have to rent the movie to find out what eventually happens.

The story brings up the question, 'what is a miracle?' Mr. Fotheringay first states that some people feel that the sun rising is in itself a miracle. But, he doesn't think that qualifies. For him "A miracle is something contrariwise to the usual course of nature done by an act of will."

Wikipedia defines a miracle as a phenomenon not fully known from the laws of nature, or an act of some supernatural entity or unknown force.

For St. Thomas, miracles are astonishing works for which we do not understand their cause. He states, properly speaking, miracles are works done by God outside the order usually observed in things.

A Gallup poll, taken in the late 1980's demonstrated that 82% of a cross-section of Americans believe even in current times miracles are performed by the power of God.

Fr. John Meier, in his remarkable book "A Marginal Jew; Rethinking the Historical Jesus" has a significant section on miracles and I would like to bring up some of his points here.

He asks the rather startling question: How do we know Jesus was a miracle worker and not a magician as some have claimed? Not the type of magician that involves sleight of hand for entertainment; but rather the type that is portrayed in the Harry Potter series and who is taught at Hogwarts. In either case, the term magician has a negative connotation when compared to miracle-worker.

Fr. Meier examines the miracles in the Gospels and the description of magic in the Greek Magical Papyri. He notes miracles are meant to lead one toward faith and the refusal to come closer to God has certain culpability.

Miracles have the context of an interpersonal relationship involving faith, trust, and or love between a human being and God. The person in need is a worshipper or disciple rather than a business client as in magic.

In a miracle there are no lengthy incantations, endless lists of esoteric names and unintelligible words, charms or recipe of foodstuffs to be boiled.

The miracle-worker does not coerce God to accede to the request; and miracles do not punish or hurt anyone, unlike magical spells for causing sickness described in the Greek Magical Papyri.

Fr. Meier, not surprisingly, indentifies Jesus as a true miracle worker.

Moses and Elijah were miracle workers. Rabbinical sources note that other charismatic Galilean holy men, such as Honi the Circle Drawer (1st C. B.C.) and Hanina ben Dosa (1st C. A.D.) were noted for powerful prayers, miracles that often answered their payers and practical acts of kindness.

Saints, of course are known for miracles and relieving the distress of others. In fact, since we all strive to eventually be saints, perhaps we should think about how **we** might perform miracles.

For example. That TV there. Suppose I collected all my will and said, "Here! You!"

Oh; I see brother Grand Knight is giving me the signal that my time is up. Perhaps next time.