

A glimpse of heaven?



Helen Nale, right, enjoys conversation with her daughter, Helen Valley. Nale believes she caught a glimpse of heaven after a near-death experience. (CR Staff/Owen Sweeney III)

Everyone has seen stories on television about people who believe they died and went to heaven. They often speak of “seeing light at the end of a tunnel,” being reunited with deceased relatives and returning to earth for unfinished business.

A few days before Christmas, I met one of them.

Helen Nale, a 94-year-old parishioner of St. Andrew by the Bay in Annapolis, suffered a stroke in early December. At the hospital, doctors told her family she was dying. She even began a “death rattle.”

But, for some unknown reason, Nale’s health made a sudden and dramatic turnaround. She awoke from a coma, said some prayers and was eventually released.

Nale doesn’t remember much of what happened in the hospital that day because she believes she was in a better place. She says she caught a glimpse of heaven and returned to earth with a mission to help some family members return to church.

Nale didn’t see any bright lights in the next world, but she told me a lot about winged angels with curly hair, happy reunions with family members, magnificent buildings and an overwhelming feeling of happiness.

“It was all a beautiful thing to be with God and the angels,” she said.

Helen Valley, Nale’s daughter and a fellow St. Andrew parishioner, said her mother has a “new lease on life” and that her experience has inspired the entire family.

Skeptics might say there’s a neurochemical explanation for Nale’s experience – that her brain was under stress and released chemicals that caused hallucinations.

Maybe. Talk to Nale, however, and you will meet a woman who has no doubt about experiencing God's profound love in a deeply personal way.

You can read the story here at [The Catholic Review](#).

What do you think?