



**To learn more about Holy Family student Matthew Pettinato, please read his journey below. Matthew fought a long battle with leukemia, and we ask that you keep him and his family in your prayers.**

11.17.09	ALL diagnosis
11.18.09	Chemo began
2.2010	First remission, continue with maintenance chemo
8.16.11	First day of kinder at Holy Family with Mrs. McCauslin
8.14.12	First day of 1st grade with Mrs. Dailey
3.2013	Restart treatment chemo due to relapse, prepare for bone marrow transplant BMT
6.2013	Move to Houston for pre-BMT treatment
7.5.13	BMT with Sarah as donor
8.20.13	First day of 2nd grade, intro to Mattbot
9.27.13	Return to Austin, continue school via Mattbot
3.17.14	Return to school in person with Mrs. Castro
7.17.14	Receive news of second relapse requiring second BMT, this time from unrelated, anonymous donor
7.18.14	Restart chemo to prepare for next BMT, and t-cell infusion
8.19.14	Start 3rd grade in the classroom with Mr. Youngpeter
10.21.14	Return to Houston to begin pre-BMT treatment
10.31.14	Second BMT, continue school via Mattbot
2.2015	Return to Austin
3.9.15	T-cell infusion
3.30.15	Return to school in person
5.2015	Receive news of third relapse
6.1.15	Restart chemo to achieve remission to enter treatment program in Philadelphia
8.26.15	Matt went heaven

On November 17, 2009, shortly after his fourth birthday, Matt was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, ALL. His treatments began the day after diagnosis. ALL treatment for boys under the age of 8 usually lasts three years and two months if things go according to plan. After Matt's first round of chemo, he did not achieve remission and we were told that upon further review, he was in a high-risk category, meaning that he would need more aggressive treatment to get him into remission. These treatments were tough, and we were in and out of the hospital through Thanksgiving and Christmas, but they worked. Thankfully, in February of 2010, Matt did achieve remission. I still remember when the doctor used that word - it was the most beautiful word I could imagine hearing at that moment. Matt was feeling great; his spirits were high, and he was on his way toward recovery. With leukemia, remission doesn't mean that you stop treatment. It is a tough cancer to kill and can hide in the blood at undetectable

amounts. Because of this, they really pile on the chemo to do their best to wipe out any chance of relapse. This also means that the immune system takes a hit. Because of that, we had to isolate ourselves from almost everyone. Matt and Sarah could not be around other kids because we could not risk the chance of bringing unwanted germs into Matt's life. The slightest cold could mean serious health complications and hospitalization. Thankfully, Matt and Sarah had each other to play with. All part of God's plan, I'm sure. Matt continued with chemo and remission for the remainder of his 3 years and a few months.

Eventually, Matt was able to play with friends again. In August of 2011, he was able to begin kindergarten at Holy Family with Sarah. It was a day of much joy for our entire family. Matt continued his maintenance treatments through kindergarten with no problems. In March of 2013, when Matt was in first grade, just a couple of weeks short of going completely "off treatment", his leukemia returned. He would have to start high doses of chemotherapy again and prepare for a bone marrow transplant. Sarah would be his donor as she was a 100% match. Matt was able to finish first grade and even participated in Run with the Angels, Field Day, soccer camp, and Cub Scout camp while he was receiving chemo. In June we all went to Houston in preparation for his bone marrow transplant. The transplant was on July 5th, 2013. Matt handled the transplant very well and so did Sarah. It was a 90+ day stay in the hospital and then another month or so in an apartment in Houston. After that we were able to move back home. Before we came home, 2nd grade started. Matt wasn't going to be able to be in the classroom for several months post-transplant because of his compromised immune system. Through a contact at the hospital, we learned of a robot that could be in the classroom but controlled remotely by the student. This robot would allow the student to attend school without being in the room. After talking with the principal, Mrs. Laster, we started the process of getting the school and Matt ready for this new technology. On the first day of 2nd grade, Matt attended class from Houston via the "Mattbot". It didn't take long for everyone to adjust to the Mattbot and it was amazing to see how Matt and those on the other end of the Mattbot could interact as if he was standing next to them in the classroom. Matt would wake up and put on his uniform every day in time for the bell. He went to specials, he participated in Mass and even attended special programs. If Matt had to spend the day in the clinic for checkups and treatments, he was still able to log on to school as long as there was a network connection. A big part of Matt's healing that year was due to fact that he had a purpose every day. He had something to look forward to and something to be responsible for. And the love and support he felt through the Mattbot from all of the teachers, friends and especially Mrs. Castro, was instrumental in getting Matt well

enough to be able to return to the classroom. Matt made his big return after spring break that year and was able to finish the rest of 2nd grade physically in the classroom.

In the summer between 2nd and 3rd grade, at his one-year post-transplant follow-up, leukemia was once again detected in Matt's marrow. He would have to have a second transplant to try and get rid of it. We would have to start chemo again and prepare to move back to Houston in the fall. Matt started 3rd grade in the classroom but after a few weeks had to use the Mattbot again. His second transplant was on October 31st, 2014. The transplant went well and we went through the same recovery process. This time we tried an additional procedure, using donor T- cells to try and fight any leukemia cells that would try to return. A couple of weeks after his transplant Matt started using the Mattbot again. We were able to move back home in February. Matt returned to the classroom at the end of March and had almost finished 3rd grade when he relapsed again. There were no more transplants to be done. The best chance we had was to get him into remission and hopefully get him approved for a different kind of T-cell study, this time in Philadelphia. Matt was admitted to the hospital in June and received more intense chemo. The cumulative effect of all of his treatments took a terrible toll on his body in the end. All of his organs began to fail and while he did achieve remission for a short time, his own marrow was not coming back, and eventually the leukemia returned. There wasn't anything else to be done. On August 26th, Matt's suffering ended, and he went to heaven.

