

I couldn't help but think of Mary, Jesus' Mother, when She held the body of Her Son after He was taken down from the cross... His open wounds... His bent, broken body. Maria had spina bifida and a hole the size of my palm in her back. She was also bent at her hands and feet... She resembled the crucified Christ... the One Who came and gave His life for us. I was holding in my arms one who gave of her life for others. How privileged I was to be her mother!

Like Jesus, Her Death Brought Life

On Christmas Eve, another story was written about a baby being born; a baby who brought people to their knees in prayer; a baby who changed hearts, lives. A story about a baby who lived, loved, and died. This story proclaimed that Maria's life and death were indeed a miracle. It reported on my labor; Maria's sporadic heartbeat and the heartbeat that was no longer. It told how Maria accomplished more "for God and against abortion than most of us do in a lifetime."

This Christmas story put it all into perspective. Christmas is not about "Santa Claus and giving your husband a pair of socks he will never wear. It's about giving of your greatest gift back to God." Maria lived a perfect life. She existed nine months in her mother's womb and went directly to her Mother and Father in Heaven.

Maria's reason for being is clear to me now. Her death brought life. Her vocation was to give of her life for the sake of others; specifically mothers contemplating abortion. As a result of Maria's story, and the grace of God, Maria will be remembered and many mothers will say "yes" to the life within them. If one life has been saved as a result of Maria's death, then her existence was all worthwhile. I believe that Maria saved more than one life.

I Asked For a Sign

So, I asked Our Lord if He would give me a sign... some indication that Maria was okay, in Heaven, and happy.

A couple of weeks passed, and I received a phone call for my husband from once again, someone I didn't know. During our conversation the woman happened to mention a dream that her 12 year old daughter, Holly, recently had.

Over the Rainbow!

Holly dreamed that she went to Heaven. There were rainbows everywhere with puffy clouds, a big gate and Jesus and Mary were there sitting on thrones that were made of clouds. And there were babies everywhere sliding down the rainbows!

I didn't think much of it at the time, and after we hung up I returned to what I had been doing. I started thinking about the babies and picturing them in my mind sliding down rainbows. I suddenly realized that I was hearing the song, *Somewhere Over the Rainbow!*

After my phone call, I had put on *The Wizard of Oz* for Joey! That was it! That was my sign! I burst into tears of ecstasy. Thank you Jesus! My little girl is okay, she is blessed, she is bounteous in Heaven with all of the other babies who have moved on. And, she will be running, jumping, and sliding down rainbows all the day long!

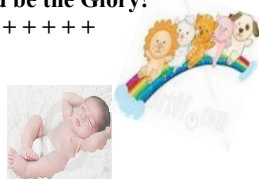
One life saved: Some months later, a fellow Oblate of St. Benedict, sent Maria's newspaper articles to someone in New York with a problem pregnancy. It seems she had been diagnosed with a Downs Syndrome baby. The doctor recommended an abortion. After reading Maria's story, the woman chose life and delivered a *perfectly healthy baby!*

The story goes on.... To this day a genetic counselor in New York City has Maria's newspaper articles on file in her office. When someone comes in who wishes to terminate their pregnancy, she shows them Maria's story.

Lives are still being saved through the intercession of my sweet baby Maria!

To God be the Glory!

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Sliding on Rainbows



*... there were rainbows everywhere with puffy clouds,
and there were babies everywhere
sliding down the rainbows!*

Sliding on Rainbows

by Terri Deluca

The nurse asked me, over the telephone, "Are you sitting down? We have got your test results back and they were positive. You are pregnant." I was overwhelmed, sobbing with tears of delight. Never had I been so joyful. We had wanted another baby for two years. Finally God had given us the gift of life again. This was the happiest day of my life!

Eight weeks later, we had our first ultrasound. "It's a girl," Dr. Homer reported.

"Are you sure?" I excitedly asked. "Well, I wouldn't go and paint the nursery, but, yes, I'm sure."

My first born son, Joey, who was two at the time, knew something was happening. He knew mommy's tummy was changing, but of course he didn't know why. I remember getting so much pleasure out of telling him that he was going to have a little sister and how it would be when she came home. Joey learned to pat my belly and say, "be-be." At mealtimes when we would ask God to bless our food, we also asked him to bless the baby and Joey would pat his own tummy! Me, the mother of two children. I could hardly believe it myself.

When the baby was 19 weeks old in utero, we had another ultrasound to check on her development, "She measures four weeks behind in growth," Debbie, the nurse, told me. She looked confused and at the same time concerned. Dr. Homer then came in. After close examination, he found the same. "At this point we will not do anything but wait. I believe that babies grow in spurts. Let's get you back here in three weeks and we will see how she's doing," the good doctor said.

After three long weeks, I returned. "She's grown three weeks in size, but is still four behind," he said. "Let us try it again in three more weeks." I felt encouraged. However, something inside of me was not so confident. My next report confirmed this feeling. Maria was now five weeks behind. "We're going to get a second opinion." Dr. Homer stated. I was concerned, but Dr. Homer assured me not to worry, so I didn't.

High Risk Pregnancy

The next week my husband Phil, Joey, and I went to see Dr. Shaver, a perinatologist, one who specializes in high-risk pregnancies. I had never considered myself "high-risk" until we walked out of the door that day. It was discovered right away by an extravagant ultrasound machine that Maria had an artery missing in her umbilical cord.

Next, they found her club feet, club hands, and an opening in her spine (spina bifida), and a "rocky" shaped head. The nurse and doctor suggested an amniocentesis to see what, if any, chromosomal damage Maria had. "It would be best if we knew what we were facing here," the doctor stated. "And it is legally too late to consider an abortion."

"That never would have been a consideration," I firmly replied. The doctor continued with his prognosis. "She could be stillborn or severely retarded", he told us honestly. I looked at Phil and he nodded his head. I reluctantly decided to go ahead with the amnio.

While they were preparing the procedure, we were sent to the genetic counselor's office to go over possibilities of what could be wrong with our baby. In the course of the conversation, abortion came up again. "Didn't Dr. Homer suggest an amniocentesis to give you the option to terminate your pregnancy?" she inquired. "It never would have been an option," I stated emphatically. "Dr. Homer knows my feelings...he did not have to ask." I was internally enraged. Phil and I left the doctor's office that day feeling weakened emotionally and physically.

That evening at home, we both felt sick; like we were coming down with the flu. Along with sleepless nights, this indisposed feeling lasted a couple of days. One week later, our anxiously awaited phone call came. "Terri, are you alone?" the genetic counselor questioned. "We've got the results of your test and they are not good. Your baby has Trisomy 18 and is going to die." she reported.

My weeping was uncontrollable. Never had I been so crushed, so devastated. I was shaking all over. The muscles in my legs were all wound up. How could this be? "What is Trisomy 18?" I asked. "It is a chromosomal abnormality which has caused your daughter severe mental retardation. As a result, her brain cannot tell her body how to function. Usually in these babies the heart stops or they just discontinue breathing."

"How long can she live with no life support?" I reluctantly asked. "If she survives the birth canal, Terri, she could live a few moments or hours. I've seen one baby live 7 days." Needless to say, I was in a state of shock.

After 7 years of being together, Phil and I had never been faced with such a trauma in our lives. God had always been so good to us and had given us everything that we needed. You could say that our life together was perfect...until now.

God's Healing Power

One night soon after, Phil came home from work, walked in the back door and declared, "Honey, we are going to set up the bassinet and get ready for Maria to come home. If we believe that she will be healed, then God will heal her."

I had already made funeral arrangements and so we decided at that moment to bury (so to speak) plans for Maria's death and concentrate totally on praying for a miracle.

I immediately thought of the woman in the Bible who believed that if she could only touch Jesus' cloak, that she would be made well.

And, so it happened. I became that woman. I believed without a shadow of a doubt that Maria was going to be perfectly normal at birth. "I tell you solemnly, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours, says the Lord" (Mk 11:23,24). I confidently clung on to those words.

The next day I typed up a novena to Blessed Margaret of Castello, a woman who was cast out by her parents for her severe deformities. I asked if people would pray the novena for 9 days and if they would like to begin it again, all the better. I also requested that they please make copies to pass along to others.

The Power of Prayer

After two months, we had over 200 copies in circulation that we knew of. Soon we counted people in 19 states who were praying for little Maria. We began receiving cards and letters from people we did not know saying that they were praying for us and for little Maria. There were all denominations of people, some who went to church, some who didn't. *But the bottom line was that they were praying.*

There were articles in the newspaper which told the story of a woman who had a third trimester abortion. Her baby was hydrocephalic and had been given 6 months to live after he was born. The mother searched and found a doctor who performed late term abortions. He ended the baby's life through an injection. The reporter labeled the procedure "a miracle." How distorted can you get? How much "skill" does it take to kill an innocent baby? And isn't the 5th commandment from God, the Giver of gifts, "Thou shalt not kill"?

Calls from strangers were on our answering machine when I arrived home from work that day saying they too were praying. This led to a newspaper column in which our story, of praying for and believing in a miracle and the integrity of life in the womb, became widespread. The columnist gave my views on abortion, "First, Terri believes abortion is murder. Second, to abort the baby would be to fail in trusting God's power to work a miracle. Maria is already a miracle," the article reported. "If she can save one life, that's why she was created."

"Impressively precocious for one who has yet to emerge from the womb - certainly marvelous, if not miraculous," wrote a Dominican Brother whom I did not know, Brother Martin Martiny, O.P.

She Was Alive

She was not just "a blob of tissue" as some pro-abortionists may argue. She was a living, loving human being crying out to the world saying, "I'm alive! I am God's creation! Don't give up on me! Hope in me! Love me!" And, they did. Maria was born on December 21, around 8:00 a.m... She departed for Heaven around 4:00 p.m. All I could think about when the doctor said, "We've lost her," was "She's in Heaven, happy, and at peace". I had no grief at that time, shed no tears. And, when I finally held my 3lb. 9oz. 15-inch baby girl, my tears were of sadness and joy. Sadness for obvious reasons, joy for Maria. I wanted what was best for my child. What mother doesn't? And what life could be more superior to eternal life with God?