

Yesterday was the 7 year anniversary of my kidney transplant surgery (I was the donor), I had not realized it had been that long. It was my beloved Godmother, my Aunt Jan, who had reminded me of this, and sent me the memories from the night before and that very morning immediately prior to operation- what is remarkable to me, and what I remember of all of that so clearly, is you can see the happiness, joy and peace on my face. There was zero fear or hesitancy for me that day, and from the moment that our story begun, it was that way. One of God's greatest gifts to me in my life was His permitting me the Blessing of being a living kidney donor and His Gift of continued life to my dear *Mesook*. Our story is one of tremendous faith and the Power of His Living Grace.

I will try to make a very long story short. At this time, I had been attending daily Mass (seven days a week), and I could not go to the typical parish I was going to for daily Mass (*St. Mark*) so in order to attend, I went to another that had a later Mass (*St. Elizabeth Ann Seton*). I remember Mass that day being extraordinarily powerful and moving and how Jesus had seemed to make me at one with His Soul. As I was leaving the Adoration Chapel, I felt the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to get the bulletin. I ignored this inspiration and continued to walk out the doors. I continued to feel the tug of His Holy Spirit, and made it all the way to my car, still intent on leaving as I did not attend that parish regularly so there was no need for me to have the bulletin. God's Operative Grace did not permit me to leave, and the inspiration gripped me so strongly, that I went back inside to get the bulletin. I will never forget that morning when I returned home. I remember the exact spot I sat at outside in front of my house, near where my Mother Mary angel statue is (when I had placed that statue out there, I had prayed and asked God to send angels to guard Mother Mary and my house- fast forward years later, to the day before I left for my kidney transplant, a woman stopped me in front yard and said, "*I normally do not tell people this, but I felt God wanted me to, I can see Angels, and you have three Angels in front of the Blessed Mother, and there are many Angels in your house, too.*"). I looked up to the Heavens and said to God, "*Okay God, what is it that You wanted me to see in here?*" I opened the bulletin and saw the tiny ad of a parishioner in need of a transplant. Instantly, I knew.

I remember placing that call, and I did not know the first time I spoke with her, or even initially when we met, that it was *Mesook* of whom I had that initial contact with (I had figured it was someone facilitating on her behalf), and I was asking if the person was still in need of a transplant. That ad had been in the bulletin for several months, without a single call. She had several individuals that had been tested and excluded as a donor (the first who tested, now a beloved Franciscan brother in Christ of mine, *Dennis William Augustine Shannon*), and was end stage. I knew in the moment I opened the bulletin, there was no doubt in my mind, but in prudence I had said I am interested and willing, but let me pray, discern, and talk with my Father (priest) and family first. My family, though hesitant, supported me. My dad recalls me telling him, "*If God doesn't want me to do it, then I won't be a match.*" To me, it was as simple as that, but yet, in my heart, again, I already knew and there was zero fear, for so strongly was it placed in my soul it was His Will for me. I remember when I called her to tell her, yes, I will do it (that

would mean testing to see if I was a match), and at that very moment I had called, she had been in front of Jesus Himself in the Blessed Sacrament in that very same chapel I had been in, and she had been praying to Mother Mary, when my call to her came.

What is far more remarkable than my willingness to be a kidney donor (God asked it of me, it was that simple), is the strength of her incredible faith. *AFTER* I had said that I would do it, but *BEFORE* I went through the testing she got a phone call from the Mayo clinic, they had a kidney for her (she was next on the list, and a man who had died in a motorcycle accident- God bless his soul and his family for being willing to donate his organs- was a perfect match for her). *Mesook* turned down a *GUARANTEED* kidney and *GUARANTEED* shot at life because so strongly in her heart did she believe that God wanted it to be me. As far she knew, I could have been excluded just as everyone else was. (That kidney she turned down, then went to the next person on the list, thus, another person granted the gift of continued life.) When it did come time for me to go through the testing, which is quite extensive, not only was I a match, but the doctor said that I was the *PERFECT* match, that I could not have been a more perfect match than what I was.

Fast forward to the time for our surgery, we had many graces, prayers from all over the world going for us, from all faith backgrounds (I still remember how touching, the photograph of *Mesook's* family in Korea they took for me, all making hearts with their hands), also this gift that should not have been, but God, in His Providence, permitted, a couple in Lourdes France that would take their disabled daughter *Guinevere* (who could not speak or move, her name means *White Angel*) to the *Lourdes Grotto* regular, and whom I had met on pilgrimage in *Italy*, we could not speak one another's language but we bonded in that moment and that day and I gifted to their daughter a rosary I had met her in *Assisi*, we remained in correspondence with (I would need to have their letters to me translated from French), had sent to me two Eucharist that had slipped in the rocks in the *Grotto* at *Lourdes*, they would retrieve these for their daughter, but had sent to me across the miles and seas the very *Body of Christ* from Lourdes for *Mesook* and *I*. When we had our surgery, we defied medicine and science, and broke the records at the Mayo clinic, the moment my kidney was placed in her body, it began functioning immediately.

Now, seven years later, my remaining kidney is failing. Never for a single solitary second will I ever have even a scintilla of regret, that moment was one of God's Greatest Gifts to me, and I will be eternally and forevermore grateful that her and I, are united so. Even should I one day need dialysis or a transplant (which I sense one day is coming, as I continue to progress rather than maintain my level of CKD, am stage 3), even should I one day lose my life from it, again I say, I am eternally grateful for this. **Jesus: "Greater Love has no man than this, one that would lay down his life for his friends."** (John 15:13). At the end of the day, sinner that I am, my saving Grace is going to be the very heart that Our Lord has blessed me with, and that I am most grateful for, and that is a Heart to Love. **"Love covers a multitude of sins"** (1 Peter 4:8), and, **"Faith, Hope and Love, and the greatest of these is Love."** (1 Corinthians 13:13).

In closing,

Father, I offer you Thanksgiving for the gift that You blessed me with, we pray for a long and fruitful life for Mesook who I know is Beloved to You, and is ever beloved to me. We pray specially this day for all living donors, for all deceased donors and their families, in particular for the man who died in the motorcycle accident whose kidney was offered to Mesook, and the person who died and whose heart was given to little Joelle when we prayed for her when she was in need of a heart transplant, we pray for all those in need of a transplant, for all those who are considering being living donors. Continued prayers for Betty, whose heart surgery had to be re-scheduled to Monday in place of one whose surgery was determined a greater medical emergency, Jesus, give to both of them Your Sacred Heart and heal the hearts that they have. Prayers for the repose of Lee West, my brother in Christ, who was on dialysis and who had asked to meet me days before he tragically passed, which providentially was on March 3, the same day as my kidney transplant, prayers for his beloved parents Maria and Kevin, and sister Brittany, who are all as family to me, Lee's final resting place is at Holy Hope Cemetery just steps away from where my family is buried and where I shall one day rest alongside my dear mother, Doreen Catherine Maria Blair- my godmother/Aunt Jan will also be there one day as will one day my Gaga (grandmother) and Uncle Johnny (Angel amongst us), already resting there are my Uncle Ronnie and my Ronnie (godbrother), my Aunt Robin, and my Grandma Blair at the nearby mausoleum, and for all Holy Souls whose final resting place is there. Prayers for the special repose of M.M. (for confidentiality I do not include her full name), recent SUICIDE, only thirty years old, Father, in You there is no time, and may our prayers for her go back in time to then, special prayers of added peace, grace and strength for her parents and family. Prayers also please for my homeless brother I met today, Isaac, who I was blessed to spend time with and buy food and drinks for, whom my father gave a ride to and will purchase clothes for, and who, as You Lord Jesus, has no place to lay his head, I could tell he was afflicted by mental health issues and valid darkness, that we command away in Your Precious Name Jesus (in praying earlier against the darkness, at the time, I felt Your Tangible Spirit course through the invisible wounds in the palm of my hands, a sensation that burns but does not cause pain, thank You Lord for this Gift of Affirmation- for rare does this happen and only in moments of Affirmation- that You Yourself Lord Jesus were commanding the darkness away from him in this moment, just as I had so prayed of You), please grant for him full conversion and deliverance, for the Grace of Healing and life circumstances, you came for the Soul such as his, and mine, you came for the sinner Lord, and You lost none of those whom the Father gave You, may Isaac's soul be such as this, he who has a strong biblical name and yet has not the gift of faith, forgive him Father, he knows not what he does, may I pray on his behalf. For this, for all the intentions within our hearts, and for all souls we pray, in Your Holy Name Jesus, I send my Guardian Angel to be with those for whom we pray, and I make whatever offering of self and expiation I can make for the Graces of which we pray even though I be an unworthy offering it is

You dear Lord who inspires me to ask for such things, may Your Will be done in all, in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen.

In the Love of Christ,

Christie, D.J.M.