

"Celebration of Life" by Norma V. Rivera

You will never know how it is to climb Mt. Moriah until you experience the journey. It is a lonely journey and as you ascend higher and nearer to the place, your heart is crushed. Only God can give you the courage to go on, can carry you through, and can sustain you in such an ordeal as no other. Today, we celebrate life. We have seen His power! He provided a way of escape, and turned our sorrows to joy, our trials into triumph.

We have two children. Irish Faye is 32 years old and Donovan 26. Irish Faye is married to Reo, also 32. It is

not often that young people are faced with many challenges. Irish Faye was diagnosed with lupus at age 19, a freshman at Southwestern Adventist University. Lupus is a chronic degenerative disease that affects mostly young women of childbearing age. It affects all organs, especially the kidneys. There is no cure and the problems are overwhelming. Since then our life has been on a roller coaster. She has known more sick days than well days. Life has been difficult. Her body was battered and scarred, but her spirit was not crushed. Little do we hear her complain! She

is gifted with a special coping mechanism, a positive outlook despite the odds, which only God can give.

Five years ago, her kidneys failed and she was put on dialysis. She was hospitalized in Loma Linda University Hospital for 6 weeks. Twice she was placed on a ventilator. Prayers were offered worldwide on her behalf. God answered our prayers and she survived. When she came out, she was skin and bones. Her beautiful dark hair fell off and she had to wear wigs. Despite all, she was determined to live. On

the first Sabbath she went to church in a wheelchair; the second Sabbath, with a walker; the third Sabbath, using a cane; but on the fourth Sabbath, she was walking on her own. She did not allow the disease to bring discouragement and despair. She stayed focused, finished school, worked, traveled and played the piano.



Early last year, she had an infection on her dialysis catheter. She was hospitalized twice and again we went on a roller coaster ride. It was turbulent and scary. Irish has been on the transplant list for the last 5 years, but donors are hard to come by. In her desperation, she asked her brother, Donovan, if he would be willing to donate one of his kidneys. Donovan seeing how his sister struggled, willingly volunteered. For medical reasons, her father, Dioni, and I cannot be donors. This is where we started our climb to Mt. Moriah.

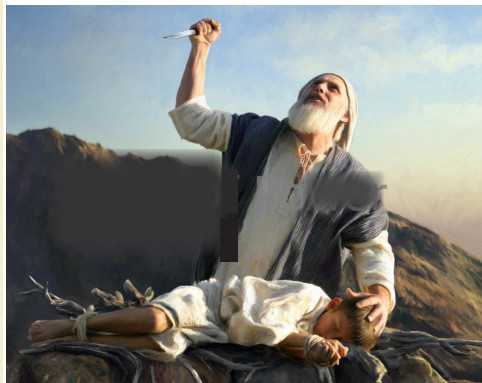
In September 20, 2009, we were told that Donovan was a potential living donor for his sister. We did a prayer dedication for him at home and invited church members who identified with our burden. For three hours we prayed, sang and gave testimonies. We wanted Donovan to know that he



was not alone. We solicited prayers all over the world via e-mail. At work, a prayer

schedule was made and we prayed for one another. There is power in prayer. Here is what happened.

It was Thursday morning October 22. We were eating breakfast. Donovan had to make the decision when the surgery would be scheduled. That very day, he



neys, Irish might die waiting for a kidney donor.”

Our experience was like Abraham going to Mt. Moriah with his only son, Isaac. Ismael, his first born son from Hagar, was sent away as instructed by God.

decided to call the hospital around 2:00 pm to schedule the surgery. Through all this, I had been struggling and wrestling with the Lord. I had a hard time giving up Donovan. Irish is a sick child and now, Donovan too. The devil tried to whisper doubts in my mind. “The risks are great!” “Donovan could die during surgery or end up on dialysis as well, if his other kidney would fail.” I said, “If Donovan would not donate one of his kid-

And now God wanted him to sacrifice Isaac, too. It was a lonely journey. I longed to talk to God, but I felt He was nowhere to be found. He was silent. So silent..... And I didn’t know whether I was doing the right thing. It was also like the experience of Jacob when Judah asked if Benjamin could go with them to Egypt. He struggled to let him go. He said, “Joseph is gone and now you want to take Benjamin?” Another experience

was when God the Father gave up Jesus to die for us to let us be saved. Finally, I said... “Father you are silent... I do not know what to do. Nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done. Into your hands, I submit my children. You are in control; you know what is best for them, and I surrender all!”

Donovan was supposed to call the hospital to schedule the surgery. He was scared but he loved his sister so much. Love conquers all fears. Donovan, however, got distracted at work and forgot to call. Irish ended up calling him. Donovan was bewildered, “oh..... I forgot to call but I will call.” Irish said, you don’t have to call.....

(YOU WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED?TO BE CONTINUED IN MAY’S EDITION)

***If you would like to share your story of how God has blessed you by being a good stewardship please send it to:**

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