

# The Birth of Hope

As many of you know, my son Thomas was born almost two months early. Immediately after he was born, both of his lungs collapsed, and he was placed on a ventilator. He was given a medication to help improve his immature lung tissue, but it initially did not work. I was asked by the Neonatologist, Dr. Kawarska, to give my consent for him to be transported to a hospital with a higher level of neonatal care. I gave my consent, but immediately fell asleep again from the anesthesia. When I awoke very early the next morning, I was relieved to find that Thomas had not been transported, until I found out it was because he was not considered stable enough for transport. The anesthesia had worn off enough for me to make some phone calls and it was then that I was able to call a member of our faith family. With that one phone call I unleashed a force more powerful than any I had known: I set into motion, the “All Mighty Holy Trinity Prayer Chain”.

I knew with one phone call that Ruth Walsh would be mustering the troops, and soon there would be people that didn't even know me praying for Thomas. Pastor Mary came to the hospital as soon as services here were completed, and baptized Thomas in the Special Care section of the Nursery.

Dr. Kawarska was off during the day, but her shift started again the next evening. She came to my room after checking on Thomas, and had a very surprised look on her face. She told me “I expected to come back this evening to see a baby who was continuing to struggle, and instead, he's a like a totally different baby”. It was true, in a short period of time Thomas had made remarkable strides, and while not completely out of the woods, he no longer struggled for each breath. I told the Doctor, “That's because

he IS a totally different baby. When you left him last he was “Baby Boy Anderson”.

Now, he is “Thomas Edward Anderson Bubnowski, Child of God, and Member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church”. She laughed and asked me how this tiny baby wound up with a big Polish last name.

Thomas continued to improve, and as his lungs matured, his breathing became more and more regulated. Sixteen days after he was born, we were finally able to bring him home, only to take him back to the hospital two weeks later for emergency surgery to repair his stomach. Once again the prayer chain was activated, and this time it was Pastor Lietske who swept into the hospital literally minutes before Thomas was taken away for surgery. Poor Pastor Lietske, he was not even ordained at this point, and found out that Thomas was having surgery from Pastor Mary who shouted out last minute instructions to him and she was leaving on a much needed and long planned vacation.

Writing this message gave me the opportunity to reflect on my experiences with Thomas in a different way. Now that Thomas is a healthy 17 month old, who runs down the aisle of church or crawls under the pew to visit with people, I was able to concentrate on what had been done for me, and for him, by our faith family, as Pastor Liestke calls us “Friends in Christ”. Pastor Mary baptizing Thomas, Ruth Walsh, and the Intercessory Prayer Group, Pastor Liestke’s blessings, my friends, and the other members of Holy Trinity who prayed for Thomas. It was these things that gave me Hope that Thomas would survive and thrive. I have often struggled with my Faith, believing that I either had none, or clearly did not have enough. I know now, from my experiences, that even if I don’t have faith, there were people that had faith enough to spare some for me. My Hope for Thomas was based not on what I could do for him, but on what God could do

for him, and not because I asked, but because other's asked for on my behalf. I look back on that experience and ask myself, "What was it that gave me Hope?" I realize now that my Hope came out of Faith. However small and unnoticed by me, my Faith in God, and His Son Jesus Christ, was somewhere inside of me, waiting to be called upon. The Birth of my Hope, and with it a realization of the unknown power of my own faith, came at the same time as the birth of my son. Seeing the miracle that God bestowed on my son, at the request of all you, gave me Hope, helped to unlock my faith, and has allowed the small seed of belief in the power of Jesus Christ that is inside of me, to begin to grow.

Pastor Mary spoke to us once about "Doubting Thomas", and it is a sermon that has always stayed with me. I consider myself a real "Doubting Thomas". We all know the story. Jesus came to the disciples, and greeted them and showed them the wounds in His hands and His side. Thomas wasn't there when Jesus appeared. We don't know why, but he wasn't there. So when the other disciples told Thomas what had happened, he did not believe them until Jesus appeared to him also. Thomas didn't believe Jesus had risen until he had the same opportunity that the other disciples had to see Jesus, and see the wounds in His hands and His side. So it's not really fair that Thomas gets a kind of "bum rap" for being a doubter, and gets accused of lacking faith, since all that really happened was Thomas needed to see Jesus in the same way the other disciples had seen Him.

The important part of Pastor Mary's sermon was in her explanation and interpretation of what Jesus said to Thomas. Jesus said, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Pastor Mary taught us that Jesus wasn't "mad" at Thomas for doubting, instead, He understood and accepted

the human frailty of needing to see it to believe it. Jesus praised those who had Faith and believed without seeing, but certainly did not condemn those of us, who, like me, and like “Doubting Thomas” needed to see it first. How ironic that I should name my son Thomas, since it was seeing the miracle of his birth, and the miracle of his survival that gave me Hope and showed me my Faith.

Hope is when people you don't even know pray for you. Hope is when a small, frail, premature baby suddenly finds the strength to pull out the ventilator. Hope was all I had when it came time to hand my son over to a surgeon, and he was so small that I could scoop him up under the armpits with two fingers. I hope my faith continues to grow, as Thomas continues to grow, and I hope he always has faith.