

## “I know that prayer saved us”

Gisela, a cooperator of Opus Dei in Ecuador, recounts how prayer helped her family overcome Covid when she was pregnant.

12/21/2020

My fifth pregnancy, far from being serene, was the most challenging of all. I am 34 years old and have three young children and three others already in heaven. My dream was always to be a mother, but my last

pregnancy was something I'll never forget.

I found out I was pregnant two weeks before the lockdown began in Ecuador due to the pandemic. So I decided to stay home and not risk seeing anyone because I didn't want to get sick. Nevertheless, when I was in the 32nd week of my pregnancy, I caught Covid-19.

## **Unexpected news and social distancing**

I was watching a television series in the evening with my husband when the results reached us. I was overcome with fear. What should we do? How should we organize our home life? Were my children infected as well? My husband Rober tested negative; we never imagined that I would fall sick.

I called the gynecologist and was surprised when he said it was his

first case of a pregnant woman with Covid-19. But he managed to calm me down and gave me clear directions to follow.

I said goodbye to Rober, who picked up his pillow and went upstairs to sleep in our oldest son's room. Then I went to our room and began my quarantine.

I couldn't leave the room, so Rober had to look after the household and our children. We have always shared in the work of raising our children, so he was ready to take on the job of feeding them, playing with them, bathing them, and coordinating everything needed for our home.

## **Complications**

On the sixth day of quarantine I became sick. I was weak and found it hard to talk. On the following day I began to get worse, and I had to start receiving oxygen at home. When I

didn't improve, on the ninth day I went to the hospital emergency room. I was really afraid. Thankfully a number of people who I came to consider as my guardian angels cared for me during the whole time of my hospitalization.

I couldn't recognize the internist because of all the protective gear he was wearing. He came up to me and said: "Gise, calm down. I'm Gordo Jarrin. Everything is going to be fine. I'll take care of you." The first thing I asked him was to not put me in the hospital. I was terrified by all the stories I had heard. "If they keep you there, you'll never leave," I had heard someone say. But the doctors decided that both for my baby's well-being and my own I should stay in the hospital.

On September 3rd, after a plasma transfusion, I thought that I was getting better, since I had rested well

and felt stronger. In reality, it was just the opposite, and my body was not reacting. I was about to begin eating breakfast when the nurses said: “take away the breakfast for the pregnant woman.” Nurses began coming in and out and finally the doctor arrived. He told me: “Gise, you haven’t improved. We have just had a medical consultation with your gynecologist, and we are going to carry out an emergency caesarean section. We will put you in intensive care.”

I asked myself: What will happen if things turn out badly? I thought of my children and my husband, and also of my parents, and once again I was overcome with uncertainty and fear. I asked the medical staff to let me keep my cellphone with me in intensive care, since I needed to see my children. They agreed and also gave me a prayer card of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, which my

husband had sent, and I had it with me the whole time.

## **The miracle of life**

In a noisy room filled with machines, with more than 15 people present whom I couldn't recognize due to their protective gear, they carried out a caesarian section. And my baby was born.

I begged God not to take me. I couldn't leave my children alone. I didn't want to die. How could He do this to Rober? It wasn't possible.

Sebastian was born like the warrior he is, shouting to the world. This is the greatest joy and peace any mother can have. I hugged him, and without knowing when we could see each other again, for his own safety they took him away.

My family was waiting outside. Since Rober and my two other children

had also just tested positive for Covid, they had to look on from a distance through a window. But we knew that our family was well.

## **I know that prayer saved us**

Many people wrote and called us. We had thousands of people praying for us: how greatly I needed it! Our family and friends didn't spare any effort to pamper and care for us. Our home was flooded with gifts: sweets, food, presents for the children.

In Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca, Riobamba and Ambato people formed prayer chains and were praying the Rosary for us. Our relatives, acquaintances, and even “strangers” were praying for our health. Our friends in Opus Dei (we are cooperators) asked everyone they knew to pray. Even two convents of nuns, also cooperators of the Work, were praying for us during those days.

I spent three days in intensive care and four more days in intermediate care. Sebas, my baby, left the hospital a day before me. Since Rober still had Covid, my two sisters received Sebas and brought him to the home of my brother. Thanks be to God, I was released the following day and went to my brother's home, where both I and my baby were cared for and pampered. But our family was still separated.

Finally, after 18 days, everyone in our family tested negative for the virus. We could come together again and begin the madness and magic of a family of five.

## **Lessons learned**

It has been a trying experience for all of us. Fear tried to take over our life, but with faith and hope we overcame it. We know that this was due to so many people who were praying for us. We have no words to express our

gratitude for all those who accompanied our family so closely.

This pandemic doesn't make any exceptions. We are all exposed to it, and this is one of the lessons we have learned. So we need to keep caring for ourselves and for those we love. Thanks be to God, we can now tell our story and give thanks, always giving thanks.

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