



# St. Juan Diego Women's Center

Help for Pregnant Women and their Babies

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Patsy Gonzalez, editor

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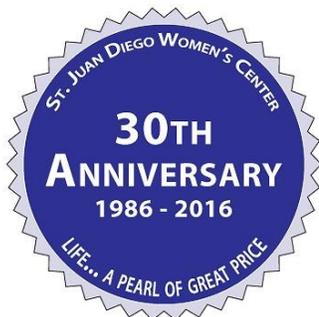
Dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Unborn

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### Mission Statement

*Our mission at St. Juan Diego Women's Center is to help young women in unplanned pregnancies and their unborn babies. We uphold the sacredness of life through our caring counselors, who provide education, emotional, and material support in a safe and loving Catholic environment. At St. Juan Diego Women's Center, everyone who walks through our door is always welcomed and treated like family. As such, we offer continued support to help mothers not only during, but also after their pregnancy.*

## My Baby, My Protector by Tricia G. Feldman

*Editor's note: There are so many accounts of pregnant mothers with a life threatening illness that have gone into remission while carrying their babies to term. Alarmed as I was when I heard of my daughter, Tricia's pregnancy while fighting a debilitating illness, I felt reassured that God would protect both mother and baby. There is emerging evidence that science is beginning to discover that there is truth to the belief that an unborn child can indeed protect his mother. Tricia was successful at encouraging a young mother on her Lyme Forum online to choose life for her unborn baby after her remarkable experience.*



Tricia & Gabriella

In September of 2014, I became very sick. My symptoms had started with a series of physical issues that increasingly grew worse and somehow developed into neurological issues. For two weeks I could barely get out of bed and then in the following weeks and months I couldn't sleep. I developed a tremor, neuropathy, severe insomnia and bladder pain that consistently tested negative for infection. I saw fifteen different doctors, none of whom could explain my condition without labeling me with anxiety and throwing prescription drugs at me. To make matters worse, my husband, Ben, was away on a combat deployment and I had two small children who relied on me to be their sole parent. I got so weak and frightened with my worsening condition that my husband had to receive permission to come straight to California because I didn't know how I was going to make the trip back to Virginia where we lived.

After seeing countless western doctors, I finally turned to an integrative doctor who practices both western and eastern medicine. He suggested looking into Lyme disease and I thought he was the crazy one. Never before had I found a tick on my body, I just had a series of bites that I had thought were spider bites. I trusted him and with the anxiety meds he gave me under my belt, I was able to get some intermittent sleep.

My husband and I returned to Virginia with our family and although I was determined to keep fighting for more answers, I was resigned to living in my current circumstances for the time being so as to get my family's life back under control. Christmas passed in a blur and I remember being constantly depressed and crying because I had never been so sick before in my entire life—mentally sick and continuing to deal with unexplained bladder and pelvic pain.

Finally in December, my Lyme test returned glaringly positive. Along with a test that indicated that our home had high levels of toxic mold, yet another contributor to my weak immune system. To make matters worse, my husband's time in the Navy had come to a close and he had no job lined up. In short, I had Lyme disease, mold toxicity, lived in a home with mold and my husband was about to lose our source of income. As we were frantically wiping down every item we owned, throwing away furniture, and scouring the rental market for a home to move into, it dawned on me that my cycle was late. I told my husband and he responded that there was no way my body was healthy enough to conceive at that point. I agreed but something continued to nag at me. About a week later, I knew I was most definitely late and decided to take a pregnancy test. I remember being in a state of utter and complete shock as I read the words "pregnant," clear as day on the pregnancy test. I took another test to confirm because I couldn't believe it, and sure enough it read the same. It was at that point that I felt like my world had completely unraveled. I had no idea how we were going to get through what was truly the worst time in my entire life between my illness, unexpected move, husband's unemployment and now a third pregnancy. I couldn't wrap my head around it.

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## My Baby, My Protector (continued from page 1)



After going to my obstetrician's office, I received another positive pregnancy test. At that point, I knew it was a reality and something I would have to come to terms with. I was distraught and asked the nurse for resources with whom to voice my concerns. They directed me to a pregnancy clinic called the Keim Center that I had never heard of before. I made an appointment with them immediately and went in to meet with the counselors and nurses.

It was so ironic to me that I was at a similar center where my own mother, Patsy, had spent so much of her life counseling others. The counselor went through all of my options as to be expected but one statement that she made hit home with me- she stated, "If you choose not to keep this baby, yes-it may seem like a temporary 'fix' to your problem and you may go on to have more children in the future. But you will never get this baby back and you will always wonder about the life that was intended for you to bring into this world."

I left that appointment with a heavy heart because I knew that everything she said was true but still had a hard time accepting this baby and what it would mean for my health and my family's future. I left the appointment and called one of my best friends in tears, the first person I told about my pregnancy besides Ben and all the medical professionals involved. She calmed me down and instructed me just to focus on the tasks I had ahead of me and to put one step ahead of the other. And to start taking my prenatals. She later told me that while she is not a spiritual person, she prayed harder for me then she had prayed in a very long time because she knew what lay ahead of me.

The next few weeks were a whirlwind as my husband and I focused on everything we needed to do to prepare for our move. He was in a state of denial about the baby and it was something neither one of us wanted to accept or discuss at that point. I will never forget my phone appointment with my Lyme doctor who was probably almost as surprised as I was to learn the news of the pregnancy. She had been ready for me with a Lyme protocol and was completely caught off guard when I gave her the news. While I had fully expected for her to tell me that she advised against the pregnancy because of transmission issues as well as the fragility of my own health, she responded, "Oh no, I would never tell you to give your baby up. In fact, most women feel better during pregnancy, and I hope you are one of those. There are pregnancy safe antibiotics that we can put you on to try to treat you and prevent transmission." Her words were music to my ears.

I decided it was time to tell my mom about the news because I was getting closer and closer to accepting that this could really happen. I told her that evening that "God had a bad sense of humor." She wasn't overly excited about that statement but understood what I meant when I told her that I was pregnant. In the next few days she gave me a message that she had received during prayer that revealed, "Tricia's not here to protect this baby, this baby is here to protect Tricia." At that moment, the baby's fate was decided and I can truly say that the doubts I had melted away and I knew everything was going to be okay.

Over the course of the next forty weeks, I observed in awe as many of my symptoms subsided. I started amoxicillin with the hopes that the baby would be protected and that it may help me to get the Lyme bacteria under control. My viral counts which had been sky high previously went down in number, my tremor completely disappeared, my consistent bladder pain let up, and my heart palpitations lessened. It was amazing that so much had changed- I felt more energy than I had had in months. I was able to live my life with renewed vigor, savoring each and every day I had with my two small children and husband, even taking them on two international trips far along into my pregnancy. I wanted to make up for the lost months I had had with them being unable to properly care for them both physically and mentally. I felt so amazing that I wanted to stay pregnant for as long as possible! It was then that I understood just how much my baby was healing me and helping me to appreciate my life and children as much as I anticipated her upcoming arrival.

In the weeks leading up to my delivery, the doctor expressed concern that the baby wasn't growing at the rate she should be. At 38 weeks, the doctor determined that she was too small and I would have to be induced in the following week. I was completely devastated- I was beyond worried about the baby's health and condition given the Lyme issues and I didn't want to force her out if she wasn't ready nor did I want any kind of medical intervention whatsoever. I prayed that all would be well and once again, my prayers were answered. The day before my induction appointment arrived I was out doing last minute shopping. Out of nowhere, the crippling anxiety I had had about the events to follow were replaced with a strong feeling of peace that everything was going to be fine. I went into labor ten minutes later. Our beautiful Gabriella was born at 7:58 pm on September 9th. She was a healthy 6 lbs 12 ounces- even bigger than her older sister was! There would have been no reason to induce my labor with her.

There were two names we had previously selected for Gabby and neither one was the name Gabriella. We chose Gabriella on the spot because it means, "strong woman of God." This little girl has been a fighter since the day she was conceived.

Looking back at the events that have unfolded, I can still understand why I had been in such a state of panic. However now, I can't picture my life without this little one and we have already developed a bond that is stronger than she will ever know. I am incredibly grateful to all of the amazing souls that helped me along the way from the nurses at my doctors office who directed me to the Keim Center instead of Planned Parenthood, to my Lyme doctor who reassured me, to my friends who supported me, and most of all to the voice who told my mom, "She is not here to protect this baby, this baby is here to protect her."

## From the Desk of Willie Lopus

### Fetal Cells In Mothers

In the preceding article "My Baby, My Protector", Tricia Feldman writes how her pregnancy caused a remission of her symptoms. The phenomenon has been reported for many years. New scientific studies are revealing a special relationship between the mother and her unborn child. There is strong evidence that cells from the unborn babies live on in their mothers even after birth, indicating these fetal cells remain and may provide stem cells that could help the mother's body repair some damage.

These new findings are now being reported in current scientific journals.

In an article published by Science News (5/10/15), Laura Sanders writes:

- *Fetal cells are probably sprinkled throughout a mother's brain.*
- *When the heart is injured, fetal cells seem to flock to the site of injury and turn into several types of specialized heart cells.*
- *Fetal cells circulate in a mother's blood.*

Robert Martone in an article published in Scientific American (12/4/12):

*The link between a mother and child is profound, and new research suggests a physical connection even deeper than anyone thought. The profound psychological and physical bonds shared by the mother and her child begin during gestation when the mother is everything for the developing fetus, supplying warmth and sustenance, while her heartbeat provides a soothing constant rhythm. The physical connection between mother and fetus is provided by the placenta, an organ, built of cells from both the mother and fetus, which serves as a conduit for the exchange of nutrients, gasses, and wastes. Cells may migrate through the placenta between the mother and the fetus, taking up residence in many organs of the body including the lung, thyroid, muscle, liver, heart, kidney and skin. These may have a broad range of impacts, from tissue repair and cancer prevention to sparking immune disorders.*

### 30 Years and Beyond

Thirty years ago, in April of 1986, a group of parishioners inspired by the late Msgr. John Sweeney started the Juan Diego Society, Inc. The center known as the Juan Diego Society Crisis Pregnancy Center was founded in response to the havoc caused by the legalization of abortion.

For the past thirty years, the center, now called the St. Juan Diego Women's Center, has served the mostly Hispanic community as a beacon of hope for mothers faced with unplanned pregnancy. Since 1986, more than 11,000 families have been aided and close to 900 babies have been saved. Three out of four abortion bound mothers chose life after being in contact with the center.

Babies are saved not because of any merit on our part but through Our Lady's intercession. Our mission like our patron, St. Juan Diego, is to be her faithful messenger. We are merely the envelope delivering her message of hope and love.

The St. Juan Diego Women's Center is unique in many ways.

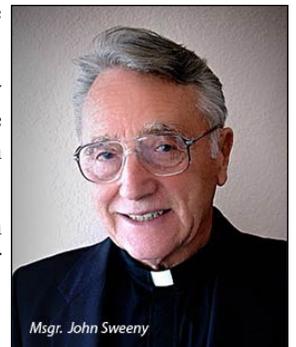
***The center is a family.*** Everyone who comes to the center is welcomed and treated with respect. It is a home where troubled mothers find peace, love and comfort.

***The center belongs to Our Lady of Guadalupe.*** Our Blessed Mother is our "directress". This is her enterprise. We turn to her for guidance and for all our needs. As long as we are faithful to her mission, Our Lady will provide.

***The center is audacious.*** Blessed with a very supportive board, the JDS is not afraid to be innovative and is dauntless in its approach to meet the ever changing needs of a mother in crisis. Life saving decisions can be put into motion immediately. Relying on our heavenly "directress", we are committed to do everything and anything possible to save a baby. The center has always been very responsive in alleviating the concerns of the abortion bound mother such that we have been called "***The little center that could***".

Looking beyond these 30 years, our hope is that the St. Juan Diego Women's Center continues as Our Blessed Mother's faithful messenger. We pray that our center keep its unique family warmth where mothers in crisis find acceptance, hope and love. For the past three decades, the center has been an oasis for despairing mothers. As we continue to evolve, may we be faithful to our mission and to put trust in Our Lady's intercession.

This center belongs to her and with her guidance we will always be the little center that could.



Msgr. John Sweeney

Juan Diego Society, Inc.

(St. Juan Diego Society Women's Center Newsletter)

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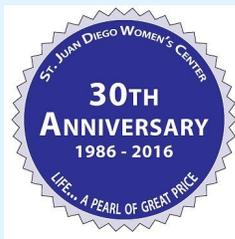
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Evelyn Reynolds

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*30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*  
*1986 - 2016*

*St. Juan Diego Women's Center*  
*Life... A Pearl of Great Price.*

*Join us in thanking Our Lady of Guadalupe,  
for the care and support that she has blessed our center.*

The center relies *solely* on your generosity. The St. Juan Diego Women's Center  
can continue to help women in crisis pregnancies *only with your support.*

*Please be generous. Together we shall save a baby.*

*No amount accompanied with love is too small.*

All donations are tax-deductible.  
Make checks payable to the Juan Diego Society.  
Donate on line. Visit website: [www.jdwcenter.org](http://www.jdwcenter.org)