



You are my sunshine



REFLECTIONS FROM FR. ROSS



Like any good mother, when Karen found out that another baby was on the way, she did what she could to help her 3-year-old son, Michael, prepare for a new sibling.

They found out that the new baby was going to be a girl, and day after day, night after night, Michael sang to his sister in mommy's tummy. He was building a bond of love with his little sister before he even met her.

The pregnancy progressed normally for Karen, an active member of the Panther Creek United Methodist Church in Morristown, Tennessee. In time, the labor pains came. Soon it was every five minutes, every three, every minute. But serious complications arose during delivery and Karen found herself in hours of labor. Would a C-section be required? Finally, after a long struggle, Michael's little sister was born. But she was in very serious condition. With a siren howling in the night, the ambulance rushed the infant to the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Mary's Hospital, Knoxville, Tennessee.

The days inched by. The little girl got worse. The pediatrician had to tell the parents there is very little hope; to be prepared for the worst. Karen and her husband contacted a local cemetery about a burial plot. They had fixed up a special room in their house for their new baby but now they found themselves having to plan for a funeral.

Michael, however, kept begging his parents to let him see his sister. He wanted to sing to her, he kept saying. Week two in intensive care looked as if a funeral would come before the week was over. Michael kept nagging about singing to his sister, but kids are never allowed in Intensive Care. Karen decided to take Michael whether they liked it or not. If he didn't see his sister right then, he may never see her alive.

She dressed him in an oversized scrub suit and marched him into ICU. He looked like a walking laundry basket. The head nurse recognized him as a child and bellowed, "Get that kid out of here now. No children are allowed." The mother rose up strong in Karen, and the usually mild-mannered lady glared steel-eyed right into the head nurse's face, her lips a firm line. "He is not leaving until he sings to his sister," she stated.

Then Karen towed Michael to his sister's bedside. He gazed at the tiny infant losing the battle to live. After a moment, he began to sing. In the pure-hearted voice of a 3-year-old, Michael sang: "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are gray." Instantly the baby girl seemed to respond. The pulse rate began to calm down and become steady. "Keep on singing, Michael," encouraged Karen with tears in her eyes. "You never know, dear, how much I love you, please don't take my sunshine away."

As Michael sang to his sister, the baby's ragged, strained breathing became as smooth as a kitten's purr. "Keep on singing, sweetheart." "The other night, dear, as I lay sleeping, I dreamed I held you in my arms." Michael's little sister began to relax as rest, healing rest, seemed to sweep over her. "Keep on singing, Michael." Tears had now conquered the face of the bossy head nurse. Karen glowed. "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. Please don't take my sunshine away..." The next day...the very next day...the little girl was well enough to go home.

The above is a true story and it demonstrates the reality, the importance, the necessity of that loving and personal touch in the healing process—and in life. When there is that connectedness between people there is the wonderful possibility of the extraordinary. When there is that connection often times there is the freeing up of the healing powers that are within each of us. I'm sure all of us have had the experience of how the feeling and/or experience of being connected and being a part of things is such a boost and allows us to accomplish things that we never thought possible.

Going back to the Gospels, how many times did Jesus touch someone and the healing took place. Most times he said that it was the person's faith that healed them: faith, of course, in God and faith themselves. Human love and relationships are the channels of divine love; they allow the extraordinary to happen. Connectedness is fundamental to our Church and Faith Community. The Church and Faith Community flow from who we are as human beings. It is not something that Jesus imposed on us and that is why he always challenges us to move beyond the legalistic idea of community. May the song in our hearts be, "You are my sunshine..."

fr.ross@verizon.net

