

Suggested Sacred Text

Hearken, O Lord, to my prayer and attend to the sound of my pleading. In the day of my distress I call upon you, for you will answer me. — Psalm 86:6-7

Sacred Story

“Donovan” means “strong warrior,” and this little boy lived up to his name. Donovan Jr., or “DJ,” was diagnosed with brain cancer when he was just a few months old. When he had a headache, he would put a hand on his head and “pray it away,” says his mother, Jasmine. DJ would do that same for others who were in pain. He had a pure relationship with God, because he believed all things were possible.

DJ began to say, “Ayúdame, Mommy,” which Jasmine found out he had learned from a Spanish educational video. It means, “Help me.” The brain tumor had grown, and DJ began sleeping more, eating less and having seizures. His legs grew weaker until he could no longer walk. It was hard for his parents to watch his silent tears; it was even harder for them to feel so helpless.

At the hospital, Jasmine learned that DJ would soon die because of his tumor. Jasmine became pregnant with her second child. DJ would put his head to her belly and ask in his little man voice, “Dere’s a baby in dere?”

DJ’s parents knew that continuing his treatment would be more for their sake than for DJ’s. In August 2013, they invited the hospice team in.

In September, Jasmine went into labor and was rushed to the hospital. At the exact time that Jasmine struggled to push the baby out of the birth canal, DJ first began to struggle for breath. Each struggled in preparation for a life to come.

Isabel Faith was born just after midnight on

September 8; DJ died later that morning. When Jasmine learned that DJ had died, she felt terrible for not being right there with him. But, her father said, “Maybe God knew that you couldn’t have handled any more.” DJ’s father had been there to hold their son when he died. As soon as she could, Jasmine went to Hospice House. DJ looked serene in death. He had an “I’m a big brother” sticker on his shirt.

Jasmine still talks about DJ, her little gentleman, who made sure not to leave his mommy empty-handed. He waited for Isabel (which means “gift from God”) to come before he returned to God. Isabel is a constant reminder to Jasmine that God has never left or forsaken her. “DJ was an angel on a mission and though the day he died is Izzy’s birthday, it is also his birthday, in a different way,” Jasmine says.

We were graced to be “spiritual midwives” for DJ, offering comfort to him and his family during his path back to God.

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Questions for Reflection

In this moving story of dying and birthing, how is the prayer answered?

In what ways might birth and death be two sides of the same coin?