

Liz had a surprise for her husband of four years. Pulling Max into the bathroom, she'd told him she'd just had it remodeled. But nothing could prepare him for the real shock that awaited him. Two pregnancy tests sat by the sink, both with tiny blue lines on them. Max went from confused, to shocked, to excited! Together, they were finally going to have a baby!

As if their lives in New York City couldn't get any busier, they'd now have to find time to squeeze in O.B. appointments, midwife interviews, and childbirth classes. But, to them, it would be more than worth it—never once would they count the cost. They were loving every minute of being pregnant. “[Pregnancy is] harder on some women than others,” Max said, “[but for Liz] There was rarely anything negative . . . [she] was so happy . . . the whole time.”

To add even more to their plate, Max and Liz would also have a camera crew documenting the whole experience. You see, shortly after learning they were pregnant, they were approached about participating in a movie. The film would be called *40 Weeks*, and it would be about 13 different families' journeys through pregnancy—y'know, the trials, tribulations, and joys of conceiving and growing a child. Max and Liz would get to share this wonderful time of their lives with the world for years to come. Between the pregnancy and now the movie offer, it didn't seem things could get any better. Until, it happened.

13 weeks into the pregnancy, Liz got some bad news. She found a lump in her back. The doctors then determined it was a tumor. Just one week into her second trimester and she was being diagnosed with undifferentiated sarcoma—a very rare cancer of the tissues that usually occurs in childhood, not in someone 35 years old like her. Imagine receiving a report like that no matter who you are, but then imagine you're pregnant too.

Liz asked what's next. The doctors told her they could immediately remove the mass with a surgical procedure—she consented. But shortly after her surgery in November of 2013, she was told that they couldn't tell if the cancer was contained or not. There was a chance that it could've spread, but in her condition it was difficult to know. Here was the problem: the contrast dyes used for full-body MRIs to determine if cancer has spread poses a big risk to the baby. But if the MRI isn't done, then the mother herself is put in great risk. What was Liz to do now?

Various doctors gave Liz and Max three options:

- 1.) To continue the pregnancy without treatment and hope for the best.
- 2.) To terminate the pregnancy—meaning the baby—and immediately begin chemotherapy.
- 3.) To undergo chemotherapy during the pregnancy, which also puts the baby at high risk.

Now, I don't care where anyone stands on life issues, this would not be an easy choice for anyone. Ultimately, it was her life or the baby's. But according to the report, it didn't take long for Liz to reach her decision.

“I'm in mama bear mode,” Liz declares, “you're messing with my cub.” There wasn't anything she wouldn't do for her baby, even if it meant the worst for herself. For Liz it was a no-brainer. “I always want you to know how important you are,” Liz spoke to her belly. “You're bigger than me. She's bigger than me.” So, Liz pressed on as is, always putting her daughter first.

At 33.5 weeks, as could've been predicted, an X-ray scan showed that the cancer had indeed returned. It had spread not only to Liz's lungs, making it difficult to breathe, but also they'd later find it in her abdomen and heart. The doctors had no choice but to move up her C-section six weeks before her March 4th due date. That way, she could begin treatment immediately. On January 23, 2014, baby Lily was born. Six weeks later, Lily's mother would lose the battle to cancer.

Looking back, Liz's husband Max says, “A lot of people never get to experience the kind of love that [Liz] had for Lily. . . . [But because of the movie footage] Lily will always know how much her mother loved her and that she gave up her life for her. . . . [Liz] was willing to sacrifice for her,” Max closes, “[and so] much good came out of that sacrifice.”

You see a lot of symbols in the Christian Church—there's the cross, the anchor, the fish, just to name a few. But occasionally you stumble upon a strange one. It's a mother pelican gathering her young under her wings. Blood red droplets pour down from her chest and feed the hungry mouths of her hatchlings. It's been said that mother pelicans, in times of famine, will sacrifice themselves for their chicks. They peck themselves to death so that their beloved children can live. It's a strange symbol to see in the Church. Except today, Good Friday. The day when your Lord Jesus Christ had a choice . . . and He chose *you*.