

## Song of Comfort and Healing

Two weeks ago Friday, as I was waiting my turn, I was reading the USA Today newspaper. After I read the sports page and especially the articles on the come from behind victory of the Phillies over the Cincinnati Reds, I turned to the “Letters to the Editor.” This is my second favorite section of the newspaper.

One letter was from Robert Morris of Jackson Mississippi.

It read:

I am one Southern Republican in agreement with New York Democratic Assemblyman Richard Brodsky’s proposal to “require that people automatically be added to the state donor registry unless they *opt out* of being a donor when they get a driver’s license.” From a USA Today story of June 30, 2010.

Morris continues: For far too many years, people have died while on the waiting list for organ donations. Too few people *think* about being a donor.

The clergy in America could make a difference. I’ve been going to church all my life and I have never heard a sermon about the sheer goodness of organ donation that could abolish the dreaded phrase “waiting list.” The more times pastors, priests and rabbis raise awareness of organ donation, the more it will be in our consciousness. Every time I pass a cemetery, I wonder how many corneas, livers and kidneys buried with the dead could have helped a person live, or live a better life.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Morris’s letter made me realize that I, too, have gone to church most of my life and I have never heard a sermon or a Sunday School class about organ donations or transplants. Not a word. Not a plus or minus, good or bad, even here’s something to think about?? So here’s something to think about:

From a blog by Katie Hill on Promegawordpress.com

This week, my brother and sister-in-law lost one of their best friends. Her name is Sarah, and she suffered cardiac and respiratory arrest on Friday. Their grief is unknowable, unmanageable, and raw. I knew Sarah, having met her many times. I laughed with her, danced with her, rocked out to my brother’s band with her, and watched her be a best friend to my little brother. Sarah has a family and group of friends that are in shock at her passing. Words do not express the feelings of grief.

But because of Sarah, on Wednesday, something miraculous happened for someone else. The parents of a 12-year-old boy were told that their child will be saved by Sarah's kidney. The family of 14-year-old girl got the news that she would receive the other one. Her heart will be going to a 59-year-old woman; her pancreas will be going to a 45-year old woman, and her liver will be going to a 45-year old woman.

In all, Sarah's organs and tissues will affect the lives of over 50 families.

In researching this blog, I found some interesting facts on the [Mayo Clinic](#) website.

- More than 101,000 people are waiting today for transplant surgeries, according to the [official U.S. government Web site for organ and tissue donation](#).
- The waiting list for transplants grows by approximately 300 people each month.
- Each day, approximately 77 people receive an organ transplant.
- However, 19 people die each day waiting for transplants that can't take place because of the shortage of donated organs.
- One-third of consenting donors never realize their wish to donate because family members subsequently refuse permission — in many cases simply because they are unaware of their loved one's preference.

Sarah's family knew that she wanted to donate her organs. While the deep sadness and loss and grief will envelop those who love Sarah for a long time, knowing that she is helping others by giving of herself provides pockets of peace.

While many people find it difficult or uncomfortable to talk about death, I really hope reading Sarah's story will give you an outlet to let your family know your feelings about organ donation. To those families who received the gift of our friend Sarah, you now have part of a strong, plucky, caring, passionate, loving person with you. Thank you, Sarah. You will be missed by more people than you ever knew.

There were many comments added to the blog, but this one most touched my heart:

Katie, Thank you for the beautiful tribute to Sarah. I'm Sarah's mom. People have been telling us what a difficult and courageous decision we made in consenting to donate Sarah's organs. I have to let you know it was never our decision to make. On the day Sarah got her driver's license, she immediately affixed the orange organ donor sticker to that license. Lewis (her dad) and I have always been listed as organ donors and she was so proud to be able to join that club. We had no decisions to make; we were merely following Sarah's wishes.<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus saw her, he had compassion for her and said do not weep.  
Compassion is the word of organ transplants, to consider in death the gift of life for someone else, is the ultimate gift of kindness.

Mr. Morris of Mississippi led me to think if, not me, who, if not now, when.  
So today, I am not asking you to donate your organs, but I am asking you to think about giving this gift. If you choose no, it is your decision, but if you consider a yes, please tell all of your family, and doctors, and anyone who may be with you at the time of death. Do not let your gift and wishes become lost, because they were not made clear.

Two weeks ago in Philadelphia, I read that letter and I sang a song of hope and mercy. I sang because when I go to Philly each summer, I also visit the University of Penn Hospital for my annual check up. I suffer from a chronic liver disease, which has no cure, but in the last stage is only treatable by a complete liver transplant. I am currently NOT in last stage, but someday I will be.

I hope someone sings of comfort and mercy and gives the gift of life. If not to me, then to someone else; if not today, maybe tomorrow.

Jesus looked upon her and had compassion.

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<sup>1</sup> Letters to the Editor, USA Today, July 9, 2010

<sup>2</sup> <http://promega.wordpress.com/2010/04/09/organ-donation-a-tribute-to-a-hero/>