

LIZOCHKA'S HEART

By Marina Petrova

My husband and I joined the Church in Russia in 1995 and were sealed the next year in the Stockholm Sweden Temple. Our two young daughters were also sealed to us. Two years later we were blessed to have another daughter, Lizochka, born to us. Our lives were going well. We were all happy. But two days after her birth, our little one began to have trouble eating. In a month she gained only two-thirds of a pound (300 g).

The staff at the children's medical center told us to feed her more often. I saw that she wanted to eat but could not. Finally, my husband took her to the city hospital. The doctor immediately gave us a diagnosis—a birth defect in the heart. One heart valve did not work, and the poor blood flow to her lungs made it hard for her to breathe or eat.

She needed an operation, but in Russia the youngest children to receive this operation were two years old. Our daughter was only one month old. The doctor prescribed a treatment for her and said that later, when she was older, they would perform the operation.

One month later, Lizochka's health worsened dramatically, and we rushed

her to the hospital. I held her as we drove. She looked at me as if pleading for help. If I had not been a member of the Church, I don't know what I would have done. But my husband and I trusted the Lord and firmly believed that all would be well. I tried to calm her, saying, "Don't be scared of anything, my little one. God loves us. He will help us, and everything will be OK."

Finally we arrived. Holding her close to me, I ran to the admitting division. Lizochka's eyes began to close. She was barely breathing. Almost unable to speak, I told a doctor about my child, and the medical staff took her to the intensive care unit. The doctor said her lungs were beginning to swell, and they hooked her up to an artificial-respiration machine.

The next day we talked with the director of the cardio surgery division. He said, "I have done such operations but only on older children. How old is she now?"

"Two months," we told him.

"She already hurts a lot. She is so small, and the swelling of her lungs is complicating things, but we must not drag this on any longer. I have never done such an operation to a small

child. I will try to do all I can. You will have to buy an artificial double valve, but it is very expensive—about \$2,100. The operation will be in four days."

What were we to do? Neither we nor anyone we knew had such money. However, our situation came to the attention of others, and through their generosity and the Lord's mercy we were able to secure the funds. My husband bought the valve we needed to save the life of our child.

Not only did all the brothers and sisters of our branch pray and fast for our little daughter but so did the missionaries and many Latter-day Saints throughout the city. We felt their support. Sitting in the hall on the day of the operation, we felt the presence of the Holy Ghost and sensed the prayers of our brothers and sisters. We knew they were near us! And God was with us, guiding the surgeons. He would not leave us, and everything would work out.

When the surgeon came out after the operation, he, somewhat bewildered, told us, "Everything worked out. We put in the valve. I do not know how, but it succeeded." But we knew how it succeeded. Heavenly Father blessed him.



WHEN PRAYERS SEEM TO GO UNANSWERED

"It is so hard when sincere prayer about something you desire very much is not answered the way you want. It is difficult to understand why your exercise of deep and sincere faith from an obedient life does not grant the desired result. The Savior taught, 'Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, *that is expedient for you.*' [D&C 88:64; emphasis added.] At times it is difficult to recognize what is *best* or *expedient* for you over time. Your life will be easier when you accept that what God does in your life is for your *eternal* good."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 9.

Lizochka stayed in the hospital three more days while the swelling of her heart and lungs went down. She had been cut open and sealed closed by only a thin membrane, and a few days later they operated again to close her chest and organs. Almost none of the doctors expected her to survive. But we believed in Heavenly Father and in His power, and we believed that if it was His will, she would recover.

Only God could have given us back our Lizochka. With each day, she got better. She stayed in the hospital another month, and now she is home with us.

God is a God of miracles. He hears our prayers, and during our hard times, He carries us. Trials strengthen our faith and teach us to believe, hope, and love. ■

The author now lives in Belgium.