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'We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.'
-Romans 8:28

I plopped myself in the window seat of the Delta plane, relieved to be on the last leg of a long trip home. Unable to walk long distance or stand in line because of prolonged foot and ankle pain, I had been graciously 'wheelchair-assisted' over miles of walkways through four different airports in the past two days. As the plane filled, a clearly North Dakota German- from- Russia- looking woman occupied the seat next to mine.

We introduced ourselves and during the 1.5-hour flight to Bismarck we ended up sharing a bit about our lives. Kathy Kennedy, mother of seven from Harvey (ND), was returning from a Catholic Daughters of America Leadership workshop in Belleville (IL). The Catholic Daughters is a faith- based organization of Catholic women dedicated to helping others. I was a Catholic missionary from Mandan returning from my work in Guatemala, and had just hobbled out of there with pain in my feet (which turned out to be a triple whammy: plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendonitis and shin splints!)

In my past experience, people had reacted to the missionary piece with raised eyebrows, "Ohhh! That must be interesting!" With Kathy, that just opened doors. There was an unspoken bond between two women of Catholic faith sitting next to each other - Holy Spirit assigned to be sure. Long before deplaning, Kathy and I had exchanged contact information and I had received a tentative invitation to speak in Harvey.

Then it wasn't I but she who recounted a story of faith, her eyes filling with tears. She relived the agonizing decision to leave ND to attend the Catholic Daughters workshop so far away when her daughter Elizabeth in Bismarck was nearing the due date for her second child. Kathy had always been available at crucial times such as these. Kathy had only chosen to represent ND Catholic Daughters after she had been assured that the baby was moving fine and was happy and healthy in there!

However, that changed. On July 13th even before leaving Bismarck, Kathy (and husband Gary) had received a text message from Elizabeth. An ultra sound had revealed that the baby wasn't moving quite right so Elizabeth entered the hospital for observation. So, it began. En route to Belleville, while at the St. Louis airport, Kathy received the news that a baby girl, Kennedy Marie, had been born!

July 14th was already a special day. It was Kathy's birthday; now it was her granddaughter's as well. The national CDA chaplain got wind of this baby born on Kathy's birthday. Before the conference started, Kathy was asked to stand; all serenaded her with the traditional Happy Birthday and rejoiced at the announcement of Kennedy's birth.

Twenty minutes later, Kathy received news that little Kennedy had been whisked into neonatal intensive care, as she struggled to breathe. A devastated Kathy wept. Shirley Siefried, one of the national officers, noticed Kathy's distress. Learning what had happened, she sprang into action. She informed the leadership of what was going on. The meeting was halted and everyone was asked to pray for Kennedy!

