

LETTERS TO MY UNBORN SON DURING THE PANDEMIC

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May 28, 2020

Dear Billy,

Well I am officially 30 weeks pregnant with you. I have to say the pregnancy has been really easy, Thank God because the rest of the world has been in chaos.

The New Providence School District, where I work, has been closed since March 16th and will continue to be closed throughout the rest of the year. Although Daddy is still working, we need to take money out of my savings to help with the mortgage and other bills. That has been stressful and we are trying to cut back on groceries.

I'm pretty satisfied with the way President Trump and Governor Murphy have been treating this illness. What has bothering me is the opposing parties have not be supportive. When Trump redistricted travel in January, Nancy Pelosi called it "outrageous." Other Democrats also criticized Trump, some even calling him a racist. In NJ, when Governor Murphy closed the state parks, some republican officials tried to get a petition going to reopen them, despite the warning from health officials. Both issues get me very angry. The parties should be working together not apart, especially during this time.

I am in a high risk category because I am pregnant. That means I can't see anyone besides Daddy unless they are six feet away or wearing a mask. I can't even do any food shopping. When Daddy does go to the store, he has to wear a mask, put his clothes in the washer as soon as he returns, and take a shower. Daddy only goes out to the store once a month to get meat, and other household supplies. We order from Amazon Fresh or Whole Foods for produce and milk weekly. Sometimes the produce we want or the type of milk we need isn't available. Being that I'm pregnant and need milk, fruit and vegetables everyday, this can be difficult. Yet we have made due with what we can get.

Your Aunt Kate has come a few times a month for a walk. When we go for a walk, we are six feet apart and she sometimes wears a masks. My belly is really big but Kate can't touch it to feel you move which is hard on her. She is also planning my baby shower. It will be a virtual one to keep everyone safe.

Not seeing your grandparents, Nonno and Oma, has been very hard too, especially on Daddy. My OBGYN, Dr. Degraff, doesn't want us to visit them because your aunt and her family stays at Nonno and Oma's every weekend down in Point Pleasant. Children are not

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as susceptible to this disease but can spread it to others rapidly. Your cousin is only two so she doesn't understand social distancing which is why it is safer for us to remain home. While things are starting to open up here in NJ, Dr. Degraff has warned me that even when you arrive in August, St. Barnabas will not be allowing any extended family to visit the Maternity Ward. Anyone who wants to visit you at home must have quarantined for at least two weeks. My main concern is keeping you safe so I will do what the doctor advises. I only hope the rest of the family understands and respects our wishes.

St. Barnabas has also decided to have all their parenting classes on Zoom, which is a way to talk and see others through the computer. I'm so glad I have had plenty of experience washing, feeding, and changing babies through out my career. Since the classes are on-line, Daddy will not have the typical hands on experience. Good thing I kept my old Cabbage Patch doll, Billy. I think we will be using it for practice on changing diapers until you arrive.

Things have also changed regarding my doctor appointments. Summit Medical Group, where I see my OBGYN, always calls the day before, not only to confirm my appointment but to make sure I don't have a fever. When I go, I have to wear a mask and wait in the hallway where a nurse takes my temperature. When I go in, the chairs are roped off. Thankfully the receptionist staff has spread out the appointments so there are not too many people in the waiting room. I really applaud everyone for being so careful. Where would we be without the nurses, doctors and receptionists?

I've known two friends that have had the Coronavirus. One survived it, and the other did not. Sam, who is in her thirties and works in a VA hospital, has recovered. I've known Sam for five years when she worked at the nursing home where my parents resided. Although she was never technically diagnosed with the virus, she had all the symptoms, like black mucous and a high fever. Therefore her doctor treated Sam as though she had COVID. Although she has recovered, Sam now has connective tissue disease which may be related to the virus. My other friend, Fr Frank Heinen, sadly passed away in mid April from the virus. I've known him since I was twelve when he came to Our Lady of Peace Church. He was one of my favorite priests. He was always smiling, admitted when he was wrong, and he never judged anyone. I can only hope Father Frank didn't suffer too much. At least now he is with your maternal grandparents. Father Frank was my father's spiritual director, which is like a counselor so I know your Pop-Pop is happy to have his friend again.

As much as I wish the pandemic was over, there are some small silver linings. Because Daddy's gym is closed and he is working from home, we now have dinner together every night. It is wonderful, especially since Daddy now does the cooking. We also go for walks almost every day, holding hands and talking about you. We are certainly spending more time together which has strengthened our marriage.

Ironically, I've been spending more time with my cousins who live throughout the country. How have I been able to do this, Billy? It's been through our zoom sessions. It has been great to talk to all my relatives at once, something we have never done before the pandemic. In fact, we have Zoomed already twice this month, once it was to play trivia. Before the Pandemic, I barely talked to my relatives. After this pandemic is over, I still plan on keeping in touch with my family.

Traffic has been almost non-existent on heavy roads like Route 22 and Morris Ave. Daddy and I have saved some money since we only need to fill up our cars every six to eight weeks. When we do go out, traffic is non-existent, especially on Route 22 and Morris Ave. This also helps the environment as well. Daddy and I have also seen many families walking or biking outside. Although some daycares and companies are starting to open up, I've heard on Facebook and the news that some parents are going to try to work at home and keep their children out of daycare. Wow!

Decades from now, when you are grown up and a family of your own, I expect you or one of your children will visit me in the nursing home and ask what it was like to live during the Pandemic. I'll probably quote Charles Dickens who said: "It was the best of times, it is the worst of times."

Sincerely yours,

Mommy

Meg Albanese