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Michelle Cascio and her husband Tim say grace before a late lunch. Michelle is pregnant and due in March. During her pregnancy, she was diagnosed with an aggressive form of pancreatic cancer. She had surgery in the fall to remove the mass, but has refused chemo or radiation until after the baby is born.

Pregnant with her fifth child, mom learns she has cancer

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A Kenosha family is seeking prayers and support for a mother who learned while pregnant with her fifth child that she has pancreatic cancer.

Tim and Michelle Cascio have four children — girls age 7, 5 and 2, and a 9-month-old son who has Down syndrome — and are expecting their fifth, a daughter they have already named Ciara, due in late March.

Michelle said she was experiencing pain in October and went to the hospital, thinking she had kidney stones during her pregnancy. In testing, doctors saw what they believed was a cyst on her pancreas.

She had surgery to remove what they hoped was a benign growth. “But they found it was cancer,” Michelle said. During the surgery, half her pancreas was removed, along with her spleen.

While they went along with the surgery, Michelle said she and her husband have opted not to have any further treatment for the cancer during her pregnancy. She will need to have chemotherapy and radiation after the baby is born.

Although doctors have suggested she have the baby early, they plan to have the pregnancy go to term. “I’m not willing to do that right now,” Michelle said of the early delivery. “She’s been through so much, I’m trying to do everything I can to make sure she’s fine.”

Instead, the strongly Catholic couple and their extended family are focusing on prayer. She said her family and supporters are praying a novena to Our Lady of Good Success.

Tim Cascio grew up in Kenosha, one of nine children

Support the family

To support the Cascio family, visit their fundraising page — which includes the novena to Our Lady of Good Success — at www.gofundme.com/2eeytz2c

in a big Italian-Irish family. Although the couple now live in Menomonee Falls and are members of St. Stanislaus parish in Milwaukee, most of the family is still here.

Tim’s sister Kamela Gleason of Kenosha started an online GoFundMe campaign to try to help offset medical costs and any future needs for the family. The campaign has been shared among Catholic groups, and people have been reaching out to them with prayers and financial support. The fund raised about \$20,000 in two days.

Michelle said she felt a bit strange about that — “you always look at those things and don’t think your own situation merits it. There are people out there with bigger need” — but said she has been touched by the outpouring of help. “I can’t believe how caring and loving people are,” she said. “People are so kind, from meals to prayers to Masses to donations.”

Michelle’s faith is helping guide her. She said before she learned she was pregnant she was at church praying a rosary. “I just finished the rosary and I heard the voice of God. I know that sounds crazy, but he said five words to me. He said ‘I know what you need.’” Michelle said.

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believe how caring and loving people are.’

Michelle Cascio
family matriarch



Cascio family in their Menomonee Falls home: Parents Tim & Michelle and kids Capri, 7, left, Chloe, 5, right, Clare, 2, in her dad’s arms and Cullen, nine-months, in his mom’s lap.

Shortly after, she said, she learned she was pregnant. “And I thought oh, this is what God means.”

Now, she is not sure. “I remember God telling me at the very beginning, I know what you need. I don’t know what that means. I don’t know if he is saying I know what you need to get to heaven.”

Regardless, she said, she

feels strong and at peace. Funny, she says, because typically she is the type that cries at the sappy commercials and was in the past so worried about her health that her husband would joke that she was a hypochondriac.

“It has to be grace, because there is no other way I can do this,” she said. “It has to be because everyone is praying.”