

## Local Catholic couple's infant son awaits kidney transplant after rare condition

DENYSE SHANNON

Apr 30, 2026

Local



Hannah and Martin Brown hold their newborn son, David, at St. Mary Parish in Royal Oak, where Fr. Paul Snyder helped the couple complete the rite of baptism for David, who was born with a rare condition caused by a blockage in his urinary tract, which led his kidneys to fail. As David awaits a kidney donation, the couple is sharing his story. (Photos courtesy of Hannah Brown)

## Hannah and Martin Brown were offered abortion for their son, David; refusing, they now await a blessing to keep him alive

**ROYAL OAK** — Before he was born, baby David's parents prayed for a miracle and for a kidney.

While Hannah and Martin Brown's infant isn't yet a year old, he gets dialysis every day.

David had his first surgery while still in the womb to treat a rare congenital urinary tract abnormality that caused his kidneys to fail before birth, and the Browns began the search for a kidney donor for David before he was born.

David's condition, a lower urinary tract obstruction — or LUTO for short — occurs more commonly in males as the urethra is forming in the womb. Blockages caused an obstruction to form, which meant David's bladder couldn't empty, and the fluid backed up to his kidneys, causing damage and eventually kidney failure.

Hannah Brown said the problem was spotted at 20 weeks when she had an anatomy scan.

“He was diagnosed before he was born because on my anatomy scan, he had a very, very large bladder,” Hannah Brown said. “So we were sent to maternal fetal medicine that confirmed the diagnosis.”

If the blockage wasn't removed, Hannah was told David's lungs could be affected, and not fully form, and he wouldn't survive. The news shook them, but not as much as what the doctors recommended.



Hannah and Martin Brown smile as Hannah holds the couple's newborn son, David. Despite doctors' offer of abortion, the couple knew that wasn't going to happen. "We just had to surrender to the Lord that David was a gift, no matter how long he was here with us," Hannah said.

"At our first appointment with the high-risk OB team after they confirmed his diagnosis, an abortion was the first thing they offered, even though I was almost 21 weeks pregnant," Hannah Brown said. "They offered it as an alternative to proceeding with the pregnancy since they couldn't guarantee that, despite the fetal procedures, he would survive. Obviously, we never would or could have chosen that."

Faithful Catholics, the Browns were at the time active members of the Basilica of St. Adalbert in Grand Rapids. Hannah was attending medical school, and Martin works for General Electric as an engineer. Hannah said they relied heavily on their parish family.

"We did have a really big community there that really walked with us through everything, and still does in many ways," she said.

While she was pregnant, Hannah agreed to a procedure to bypass the obstruction, but there was no guarantee. Facing the second half of her pregnancy, “We just had to surrender to the Lord that David was a gift, no matter how long he was here with us,” she said.

“Once he was born, he had surgery his first day of life to get rid of that extra tissue that was in the urethra, and to kind of clear the obstruction so there wasn’t ongoing damage, and to correct the root cause of the problem,” Hannah said.

Unfortunately, David’s kidneys had already failed.

While they wait for a kidney donor, Hannah and Martin are trying to navigate their lives around David's schedule. Every night, they give him dialysis for 10 hours while he sleeps so he can grow and gain the strength for a transplant.

“I think we've been very fortunate because there are kids who don't tolerate the dialysis at all for one reason or another, and he's never really had any issues. It's intense,” Hannah said, “but it's hard to imagine any alternative when he's done so well with it. It keeps him alive and growing.”

Not knowing what would happen, or how long David would survive, Hannah said Martin baptized their son immediately when he was born. “We had discussions and kind of approval ahead of time for Martin to be able to do that for David,” she said.

In the midst of giving birth, finishing medical school, and entering into a residency, Hannah and Martin also moved from Grand Rapids to Royal Oak. They said goodbye to their parish family at the basilica, but she said they are still very close.

Since moving to Metro Detroit, the couple has begun to attend St. Mary Parish in Royal Oak, where they are getting to know Fr. Paul Snyder.

“We've been in close contact with Fr. Paul Snyder,” she said, explaining that after Martin baptized David, they still needed to complete the rite. “We were able to have the full Rite of Welcoming for the baptismal rite in October. We shared David's story with Fr. Paul to explain the situation, and we've kept him updated periodically.”



Since moving to Metro Detroit, the couple has begun to attend St. Mary Parish in Royal Oak, which has been steadfast in its support and prayers for the couple.

Fr. Snyder said the Browns are a "super prayerful" couple who have the support of the St. Mary's community. St. Mary's has a lot of younger families, and Fr. Snyder believes it's God's grace that they are part of the parish.

"We've been able to pray for them and share their little one David's need," Fr. Snyder told *Detroit Catholic*. "They're doing the most important thing, which is worshiping at Mass, and we're supporting them at Mass. They know they are not alone."

While Hannah is in residency in Royal Oak, Martin is able to continue his job with GE remotely, which is a grace, Hannah said.

"It's really been a huge blessing," Hannah said. "It provides us a lot of flexibility with his hours and his work schedule for when and if David gets sick or has appointments."

David will likely have to wait until he's a year or two old to receive a kidney transplant, which will have to be from an adult donor. Now the wait is for David to be old enough to have all the vaccines he needs, she said, then to find the right donor.

"He actually had his evaluation a couple of weeks ago," Hannah said. "The two limiting factors for a kiddo to get a transplant as young as David are their age and their size. David's growing so well that when the surgeon saw him, he held his fingers up, put them to David, and was like, 'Oh yeah, we'll be able to fit an adult kidney in you, no problem.'"

The family heads to Ann Arbor frequently for David's medical care and has shared his story on social media.

View Hannah's [Facebook post](#), where she has linked a video and photos of David's journey. Information on the [Michigan Medicine Donor Registry](#) is also posted there.