

How St. Joseph brought me to Mary

My praises of St. Joseph echo the praises of the multitude of saints throughout the ages who have discovered a sturdy and faithful companion in him for all their needs. St. Teresa of Avila sparked the beginning of my devotion when she wrote in her autobiography, "Would that I could persuade everyone to be devout to this glorious saint; for I know by long experience what blessings he can obtain for us from God."

During my childhood, Joseph accompanied me as my vocation began to take shape in the Church. I was baptized on the feast of St. Joseph the Worker and confirmed in St. Joseph's Church in Battle Creek, Michigan. I always had a sense that he was with me in the background providing for my needs big and small. Also, his presence among the Holy Family always was a comfort for me. His humanity held a place for me. I often thought about what it must have been like to sit at a table with the Savior of the Universe and the Immaculate Conception. He showed me how.

St. Joseph also showed me how to follow God's will, even when it's cloaked in mystery. Before entering the convent, I needed to resolve substantial student loans remaining from my college tuition. Between fundraising with the Laboure Society, two part-time jobs, freelancing and selling my art on the side, my life was very full. With my application for the Daughters of St. Paul submitted and interviews completed, the last step was a live-in experience with the sisters. I was sent to our community in Alexandria, Virginia. Exhausted and overwhelmed by the thought of having to step away from my responsibilities, I also was just not sure I could afford the time away from working and fundraising if I wanted to enter the convent by that fall. On the plane ride from Detroit to D.C., I added up the amount this trip would cost, and it came

to about \$4,000. I gulped, and I gave it to St. Joseph.

Then, on top of my other anxieties, for the first three days of my visit I came down with a sinus infection and a bad cough. I kept handing over my worry to St. Joseph. Sniffling and struggling to pray in the convent chapel just above our book center, I asked St. Joseph again to provide for me, to ask Jesus to make this time fruitful even though I felt helpless and miserable. "I can't even pray or hear Jesus," I whimpered through frustrated and tired tears.

Then I felt St. Joseph telling me that there are some things that only Mary can bring to her Son. I was filled with his admiration for her. I felt her maternal presence wrapped around me like her mantle. For the rest of my trip, I had a sense of assurance that she was taking care of my concerns. I was free of worry and filled with trust. I had a lovely visit with the sisters, praying, visiting the National Gallery, baking kolache with Sister Mary Peter, decorating Easter eggs, and eating Sister Grace's famous sugar cookies. We celebrated a beautiful Easter together.

I boarded the plane ride home with a deep sense of conviction and peace in my vocational discernment. The person sitting next to me struck up a friendly conversation. When he learned that I was discerning religious life, and I told him about the sisters' mission, he was moved to share his own love for Christ as a Protestant and about the missionary work that he and his family have been a part of in China. Before leaving the terminal, the man asked me if we could pray together. I felt a sense of Mary's presence again. I shared with him a brochure that had my vocation story written up in it by the Laboure Society. He was grateful and we parted. Several weeks later I received an email letting me know that he had mailed a donation – for \$4,000, the same amount I had written in my journal on the flight over.

I learned a lot about St. Joseph and how to follow God's will

during that trip. I learned especially that my surrender to God's plans for my life would be made fruitful through Mary. St. Joseph works with Mary to lead people to the fruit of her womb. And in the womb of Mary our offerings, big or small, are made fruitful.

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