



Before we were even married, Jim and I agreed on two events for our future. We knew we would adopt, and we knew Jim would actively discern his diaconate calling. What we didn't know was that it would happen at the same time.

On a Spring day in 1995, Jim came home from a meeting with our pastor, Fr. Gene Tiffany. He beamed as he announced, "Fr. Tiffany thinks I should apply to diaconate formation!" I was not surprised as it had been in our plans but had yet to be scheduled. "I know," I smiled. "No. NOW!" Jim insisted.

The rest of the conversation blurred as I began an internal conversation with God. See, we were in the midst of the adoption process, and I wanted to focus all of our energy on adding to our family. With our Amy being 7 at the time, we

wanted to increase our family while still young enough to keep up with them. I could not imagine dividing our attention between two such very important events. I pleaded with God, "Please! Give us one year! We can get our ducks in a row and maybe even have a child placed before entering diaconate formation." I felt God smile. We were too late to be considered for the upcoming diaconate class, so we basically got our year.

By the next Spring I realized things were overlapping again. We finished our interview and paperwork for diaconate, as well as the classes and homework for adoption. Once again, I pleaded, "God! Please! Just one more year! My ducks were running rampant!" This time God said, "No."

In May Jim received his acceptance letter from the Diaconate Office, and we met our Amanda for the first time. I felt anger and guilt leaving our new 5-year-old with a sitter while we went to meet our diaconate classmates. Looking back, I can say I did feel God smile. Having the weekly support of the diaconate community played the background music for our dance of integrating our family. As we danced, there were many times we stepped on each other's toes as we learned to dip and glide together. In between our classes I could feel the community's prayers reminding me how it truly does take a village.

Fast forward 13 years. Our Amanda, with the help of her village, successfully navigated the waters of education. She graduated from high school and was gainfully employed. As a young adult she decided to leave her village. She chose to walk away from her supportive parents and tried to burn some bridges along the way. She cut us off. Once again, I pleaded to God, "Please! Bring her back!" And once again God said, "No." He reminded me how her village continues to grow and support her physically and spiritually.



One of the ways I see God communicate with me is through Facebook. At a time when Amanda was heavy on my heart I saw this message posted there: "Your children can run from you, their upbringing, from the church but they can never run from your prayers! Keep on praying!" My prayers are no longer "Bring her back." I pray, "Bring her safely to Your Home." The pain that this break causes could be overwhelming were it not for the Grace of God. The village of support continues to grow. Prayers encircle each of us even when I don't have words to pray - thanks to the village.

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*Jen Marschall | March 2019*