

31 Days of the Little Way: The Case of the Missing Jacket

Before I met John, I never knew about train shows, which are sort of flea markets for toy trains and train accessories. Most times when John goes to a train show, he takes his dad or one of our boys.

A couple of weeks ago John and Leo went to one and had a great time, especially because John's dad went, too. Then at the end of the show, they left my son's jacket behind. They realized it miles and miles later, so they came home without it.

When Leo told me, I was so disappointed. The jacket was brand-new. I tried not to think about what it had cost and—more frustrating—the fact that I would now have to go shopping again. Naturally I hadn't labeled it.

Oh, well, I figured. A jacket is a jacket. I hoped the person who found it could use it or donate it to someone who needed it.

Then the lady who ran the train show called John. She had found the jacket and remembered seeing our son at the show. She thought it might belong to him.



I'm so grateful to her. And I'm giving St. Anthony the credit for this one.

The jacket finder and her husband live not far from our former parish, St. Mark's in Catonsville, Md., and Leo had been asking to go back to St. Mark's for a visit. So John made plans to go to St. Mark's for Sunday Mass and pick up the jacket afterward.

St. Mark's has a special place in our family history. John and I met on the church steps there for our first date 13 years ago. A few years later we bought our first home in Catonsville, and we found our way back to St. Mark's. It was there that we met the Bartlinski family and got to know Teresa's story. And we have so many other memories, many of which started creeping back into my thoughts as we passed through the doors there on our way to Mass.



But obviously I couldn't do much reminiscing during Mass, especially because the pastor, Fr. Christopher Whatley, is a phenomenal homilist, and he always says something that speaks to me.

This Sunday he was talking about faith. He explained how if you look at the Latin for "credo," the word that gives us "creed," you can break it into two pieces—"do" from the verb "to give" and "cre" from the work for heart. When we say we believe, we

are saying we give our hearts.

Now, I should definitely know that because I studied Latin in college, but hearing it today really struck me. I thought of how I believe in God, of course, and how we say, "We lift our hearts to the Lord." Then I thought of how I believe in my marriage, and how we have made that same leap of faith in becoming parents, believing in our children, believing in our family, believing we would do all we could to support and strengthen these souls who are entrusted to our care.

I do. I believe. I give my heart.

After Mass, Daniel and I walked across the church to take a photo of a stained glass window I have seen and loved so many times. So often I spoke to their guardian angels when our children were on the other side of the world, and we were waiting to meet them. What I didn't realize until later was that today was the Feast of the Guardian Angels.



Then we drove to pick up the jacket. When we pulled up to the house, we saw a Blessed Mother statue in the front yard. But that moment ended up being such a small piece of the day.

We had such a wonderful time together, enjoying Mass back at St. Mark's, the car ride together, and lunch at our favorite restaurant in that part of town, Dimitri's, with saganaki, the flaming Greek cheese our children rave about.

I'm happy to have the jacket back. But, looking back at our day, I'm also happy we lost it.

Things often happen for a reason, I believe.

