

An open window

John and I always hoped for children. We prayed for a family as we practiced natural family planning. We just didn't know how long it would take to become parents.

I remember talking to one kind, well-intentioned priest. "Pray to St. Gerard," he told me in his most reassuring voice, echoing the words others had already offered. If St. Gerard happened to be listening at that moment, he must have laughed. The St. Gerard holy card on my nightstand was already tattered.



When we went to Mass each Sunday, John and I would see families, large and small. We watched the children coloring in the pews, dipping their fingers in the holy water, swinging their legs during the homily. Expectant mothers were everywhere. What were we doing wrong? Were we not meant to be parents? What was God's plan? It was hard not to envy those families or the many friends and family members who were celebrating their children's births.

Of course, it wasn't that we just wanted any child. We wanted our child. And we kept reminding ourselves that God's plan and timing weren't ours.



Anyone who has faced infertility knows the emotional strain. In today's world there are many widely advertised fertility options offered to couples, and I absolutely understand the desire to become parents that entices couples down those paths. John and I both felt strongly that we could not and would not pursue any steps that were not in line with the teachings of the church. Our God was sovereign, and if he wanted us to conceive and bear a child - as he had for a young virgin in Nazareth - he would make it happen.

As we were waiting to become parents, I couldn't help thinking of that line in Sound of Music when Julie Andrews says, in her elegant British accent, "When the Lord closes a door, somewhere he opens a window."



It just took us a little while to find that window. Now that we've climbed through it, however, we have discovered a whole world – a world where, as it turns out, we are very much at home. As adoptive parents, we have met generous people who give of themselves and their resources to serve orphans. We encounter inspiring, faith-filled families who have adopted children with significant medical and emotional needs. And twice John and I have traveled to the other side of the world to become parents – each time crying together as we held our sons for the first time.

Those weren't our first tears on the journey to parenthood. But nearly every day as I argue with our sons over how many grapes a child can eat, join in their excitement over a cement mixer, or sing them to sleep, I thank God for his unexpected answer to our prayers.

I have no doubt that the journey through the door is fantastic, but, as it turns out, the trip through the window has been wondrous and miraculous – and the adventure on the other side was well worth the wait.

