

Catholic Throwback Thursday: Remembering a Cathedral in China

Before we traveled to China in August 2011 to adopt our younger son, John and I looked online and found a Catholic cathedral in Guangzhou. We knew we'd be spending almost two weeks in that city, so getting to Mass as a family seemed like a real possibility.



That Sunday morning we found ourselves choosing between an earlier Mass in Mandarin and a later one in Cantonese. To our knowledge, our then-20-month-old had been hearing only Cantonese, but there wasn't much point in choosing a Mass based on his language abilities. It seemed unlikely that he would tell us about the homily later.



Besides, the earlier Mass worked well for a jet-lagged family living on little sleep. So we hopped into a cab and headed to the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Guangzhou.

The church, which was built in 1863—certainly not old for China—was beautiful. If I remember correctly, the Chinese people call it “the stone house” because it is made mostly of stone—though with a brick ceiling.



John and I had very little trouble following along with the Mass and saying the prayers in English. As John said afterward, “I got ‘amen,’ ‘alleluia,’ and the word for Jesus.’”



In what may be universal Catholic tradition, the church was fairly empty until the last few minutes before Mass started when it filled up quickly.



We were moved by the reverence of the congregation. They bowed to one another during the sign of peace. But what I remember best was how they beamed at our little boy and gave us

such a warm welcome. Before Mass, a kind lady came over to see Daniel, talking enthusiastically and grinning at him. Without understanding her words, we knew what she was saying—that she was happy for us, for our son, and that he was really, really cute.



Daniel sat quietly the whole time, playing with my camera case or pointing to whatever he saw. To this day, that may be his personal best for the quietest he has ever been in a Catholic church.



An archbishop was saying the Mass, and when we went up for Communion, Daniel was in his Baba's arms. The archbishop reached out to bless our son of just a few days.



This is the church gift shop.

We have so many memories of our journey to and with Daniel, but that day was truly a special one. The first time we introduced our son to the Mass we were in a beautiful cathedral in his homeland.



Note how our amazing son knew how to pose for photos for the blog a mere four days after we met.

Today I'm joining my friend and fellow blogger Patti as she celebrates Catholic Throwback Thursdays on her blog. In her post today Patti writes about Pope Benedict's visit to Yankee Stadium in 2008.

Patti and I are blogging each day this week in conjunction with the "7 Posts in 7 Days" challenge from Jen's Conversion Diary.