

Greeting New Year with trust and hope

It was just an ordinary Sunday, the first one of the New Year. My husband and I had gone to Mass and then for a relaxing grocery shopping trip. It was 10 years ago, and we hadn't brought our cell phones. Who would want to reach us anyway?

As we carried the groceries into our house, we saw we had a voice mail message. We were waiting to adopt, but we didn't expect a match any time soon, so we were surprised to hear that the message was from our social worker at Catholic Charities. She wanted us to call right away.

She started describing a little boy in China who was ready for adoption, but I interrupted her.

"You must have us confused with someone else," I said. "We haven't even finished our paperwork."

But I was wrong. We had been matched. In a daze, I scribbled some information about a 13-month-old baby on the back of a Christmas card envelope and hung up the phone. My husband and I stood staring at each other in shock. We weren't ready to travel to China. We both had new jobs, no vacation time, and none of the money we had planned to save for our travels. We had waited five years to become parents, been fingerprinted and interviewed and screened in so many ways, but we still didn't feel ready. We hadn't even discussed baby names.

We were overcome with emotion. The file for this baby boy was sitting in our email inbox, but we stumbled around the house not speaking, trying to get up the nerve to look.

Finally we sat down and waited as the computer slowly brought up a tiny black-and-white photo of a child on the other side of the world – a baby boy with deep, expressive eyes, dark fuzz for hair, and the sweetest little mouth. We knew very little about him. But we knew he was ours. We knew we were in love.

We read the whole file, drinking in every detail. We had never discussed a single boy's name, but we looked at each other and knew immediately what his American name would be. He was absolutely precious and perfect. And he would be our son.

Not every January brings that kind of dramatic beginning. Often after the fireworks go off and the ball drops in Times Square, the New Year feels much the same as the old one. But every year arrives with tremendous hope.

Maybe 2019 won't bring an end to violent crime, a cure for cancer and world peace. But it begins with a clean slate and tremendous opportunity. And, as we turn the page on an old year and begin anew, we do so with the knowledge that many of the challenges we face in our fallen world will come with us into the New Year. As Christians, we trust that God is bigger than any problem we will face in the future – and that he has a role for us in this amazing story. We step into the New Year with faith that each of us can help make the world a little better.

On that day 10 years ago when we first saw the photo of our baby boy, I was excited and nervous and hopeful and scared. There were so many unknowns, as we wondered and worried about the journey ahead. But we knew whatever the future held, we would not walk alone. Our Father in Heaven would walk with us, just as he would be watching over this little one on the other side of the world. We began the journey of a lifetime with faith, with trust, and with hope.

We didn't realize then that it would take 11 months to meet our son and that all the worries we had about not being ready would be irrelevant. We couldn't see then that

the agonizing wait would disappear the instant we held him in our arms.

Whatever lies ahead in 2019, I hope this New Year brings many blessings for you. May it be a precious gift from God, unwrapped and presented to you one beautiful day at a time.