Just a moment

When you are waiting to adopt your child, you focus so much on one moment—the moment you will hold your child in your arms for the first time.

Will he scream?
Will he smile?
Will he cry?
Will he feel like my son?
Will I feel like his mother?

You read and ask questions and pray. Then you pray some more.

Nothing can truly prepare you.

Then at last you’re there.

You see him.

Someone places him in your arms. He’s confused, probably scared, and oh-so-cuddly. He’s amazing. You drink in his deep brown eyes, his wispy hair, his sweet scent, his little feet, his hands clutching at your shirt.

You rack your brain for the little Mandarin you know—only to realize later your child has only heard Cantonese. But you murmur to him mostly in English anyway, explaining, reassuring, promising, telling him how much you love him already.

In that moment, an ending and a beginning, you are strangers, yet also forever family.
When you can take your eyes off your son, you look into your husband’s eyes, so full of joy. And it’s only then that you realize you are beaming, too, even as tears are running down your cheeks.

You want to freeze in time the moment you first held this magnificent child, the moment you became a mother for a second time, the moment you became a family of four.

But you also know how wonderful the next moments can be, so you also almost want to hit fast-forward. Of course, you don’t need to.

Soon enough you’re hurtling into the next moment when your son smiles shyly, points at you, and calls you “Mama” and “Baba.” And then there’s the moment when he meets his big brother. And then the moment when you can’t remember ever not being his mother. That comes quickly.

Then all of a sudden, it’s two years later and you’re retelling him the story of the day he became your son. And, he listens, even as he’s playing with plastic boats in the tub. He may not understand completely, but he knows it’s his special story.

Even though your son may not remember that moment, you will probably always be able to close your eyes and place yourself back in a government office in Guangzhou on a humid August afternoon.

At the end of the story, you say to your son, “Do you know how much I love you?”

And, with the authority and wisdom of an almost-4-year-old, he says, “Fifteen.” And then he laughs—and you laugh, too.

You think, not for the first time, how extraordinary even these small everyday moments are.

And you marvel yet again that you are blessed to be the mother of this child you first held in your arms two years ago today.

Joining Theology Is a Verb and Reconciled to You for Worth Revisiting Wednesday on Aug. 12, 2015.