

Matched through adoption: The first time we saw our son's picture

Nine years ago today John and I went to Mass and then grocery shopping. It was a Sunday, the feast of the Epiphany, and we didn't have much to do.

We had left our cell phones at home, and we strolled the grocery store for a while before we headed back to the house.

That's when we found a voice mail on our home phone.

It was our social worker. She was saying that she had a referral for us—a child! But that couldn't be right. We had finished our home study but nothing else. We hadn't sent any paperwork to China.

I called to tell her she was wrong. She must have us confused with some other waiting parents.

But no. I was wrong.

We had received a referral for a baby boy. He was 13 months old, living in Hunan Province, and she said he was adorable.

I hung up the phone, and John and I stared at each other.

You might think that a couple who had been waiting to become parents for years—and who had intentionally started the adoption process—would be ready for this call. But we were in shock. We hadn't expected this call for months. I had just started a new job, and my husband was about to start one, too. Would we even be able to take the time to go to China together? This was not the timing we had

imagined. We were nervous.

We stumbled around the house for a while. Then we finally sat in front of our computer to open the email with this little boy's file.

Our children will never understand this part of the story, but even though it was 2009, we had dial-up internet access and the slowest possible connection. Waiting for the PDF to open on our very slow computer took just a little less than forever.

But once it opened, we saw his little face.

There was the tiniest black and white photo of his sweet little face looking into the camera. We just sat and drank him in.



He was gorgeous. Absolutely beautiful. His curious eyes...his fuzzy hair...his perfect little mouth. We could have sat and looked at him all day. And I knew then that what I had heard other adoptive parents say was true. You can fall in love with a photo.

I looked at him, and I knew he was ours. And although there were pages and pages of medical history and information about his life to read, I had no interest in any of it—until we realized there were a few larger color photos of him. All I wanted was to go to China right that instant and be with him.

We had to wait, of course. It took time for all the paperwork and governmental approvals to go through. We didn't hold that baby boy in our arms for 11 long months.

But in that moment, as we looked into the eyes of a little boy who had been born on the other side of the world, I knew one thing for sure. He was our son. We were his family.

And we were beginning the journey of a lifetime.