

A Moving Story, Part 1: The Sign

Sometimes when God gives us a sign, it is *literally* a sign. At least that's what happened to us. It was a few days before school got out and Patrick decided to drop by the office on the way home from a birthday party. His office is actually the farm that he and his father operate. It's a beautiful piece of property and we've always dreamed of living there. But, for a number of reasons outside our locus of control, it was an unlikely scenario. So, we continued to reside in downtown Aberdeen in a house that had gotten a little too cozy when we added a sixth member to our family last summer.

We loved just about everything our house (except the size), our next-door neighbors, and the fact that we could walk to St. Joan of Arc, where Collin goes to school, I teach art, and we worship every Sunday. But when we drove past a "For Rent" sign on the sprawling lawn of a gorgeous farmhouse on our way to the "office," Patrick and I looked at each other with an overwhelming curiosity. He hadn't seen the sign the day before. It seemed to have come out of nowhere. We turned back and saw that there was a phone number on the sign. "Five bedrooms!" he told me as the lady's voice on the recording spouted off the details. "Brand new kitchen! Huge family room!" This house had everything we could ever have dreamed of...until we heard the price.

When I heard that the rent was significantly more than our current mortgage, I told Patrick to hang up. I didn't want to get my hopes up. So, we headed back to the place we'd called home for a decade, our minds slowing down like a steam engine easing its way into the station. "It's probably not the right time," I told Patrick, as we tucked our three growing boys into the small bedroom they shared.

"No. We're not going to give up on this. I'm going to call again and leave a message," he said. Within a few minutes, the owner called and provided more information. Patrick got out a pencil and some paper and scribbled down some details. "My wife is a teacher and this is the last week of school, so can we wait until next week. Tuesday? Three is good for us. Thanks!"

"We're going to see the house," Patrick said after he hung up the phone.

"I can't tease myself like that," I told him. "We could never afford to live there."

"After talking to her, I think we can," he said. "Let me crunch some numbers. If this is meant to work out, it will. Stay positive."

I prayed every moment I could for God to place me and my family in the home where he wanted us. I'd always been amazed that I bought a house on the same street as a Catholic church and school. I thought that if God wanted to keep me in my parish community, then I was okay with that. But, maybe, just maybe, He had something else in mind for us. Maybe it would be this house.

I waited to see the inside of the house with the same anticipation I felt in the days before I delivered each of my children. I didn't have a clear picture of what the inside of the house might look like. What if the walls were painted in neon colors and there was white shag carpeting throughout? What if there was another blue bathtub like the one I had at home? Or what if the HVAC system was non-functional? I reassured myself by looking at the photograph I took from the car window. This house was beautiful. Someone had taken care of it.

We met the landlords a week after discovering the house. When I opened the door, it felt like one of those moments in one of those home remodeling shows. I was blown away by the beauty of this house, which was originally built in 1930 and renovated in 2015 . It has an enormous kitchen with new appliances and a fireplace original to the house, a dining room with tons of windows overlooking a field and the woods, and a family room that could easily accommodate a big family like ours...and all of our friends! The walls are painted in rich, warm earth tones and a high-pile speckled neutral carpet and oak vinyl planks covered the floors. The bathtubs were huge and white, not blue. Brand new HVAC units ensured that I'd never be too hot or too cold. Everything would feel "just right." I immediately started envisioning my furniture and pictures bedecking the space and all of its architectural details. This place looked like the house I always dreamed of building...except it was already here.

Patrick decided to take another week to think about it without blindly rushing into a situation we couldn't handle. I prayed to God once again to place us in a home that will bring us great joy and asked Him to grant me the patience to wait for Patrick's decision. Whenever I'm in a situation where I agonize over time, I always ask for

patience, and it always comes, even if I have to wait a short while.

After some intense consideration Patrick decided that moving to the farm house would be the best move for our family. It was close to the farm, not too far from St. Joan of Arc, had enough room inside and outside for our family, didn't need any work, wouldn't require the time and financial commitment of shopping for another house, offered an opportunity for our child with special needs to attend a great school, and by the stroke of God's hand, Patrick managed to find just enough money in our budget to supplement the difference between our old mortgage and our new rent. We'd have to make some sacrifices, but all the pieces to our puzzle was assembled so perfectly, it had to be divine intervention.

We realized that when we saw that "For Rent" sign, God was leading us to a new home He had chosen for us. I sent up a thousand prayers of gratitude. Thanks be to God for leading us to that sign. Thanks be to God for making this house the manifestation of my dream home. Thanks be to God for granting me the patience as I waited to sign the lease. Thanks be to God for providing us the resources we need to make this possible. And, as always, thank you, thank you, thank you, for sending your Son to allow us to live in your house for eternity. Thank you for posting that "For Sale" sign most of all. You have led us to your kingdom in heaven just as you led me to my home here on Earth. Through You all things are possible. And believe me, I needed to know that for my next step: packing. Stop by next time and you'll see what I learned by packing up 6 people's lives in a few short weeks.

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