

Suddenly Annie

"I'm going to take Mom to see *Annie* on Saturday for her birthday," my dad said earlier this month.

It was a children's Theatreworks production that would take place on Dec. 2 at The Highlands School in Bel Air, just moments from my parents' house. Even though a few of my current and former students were involved in the production, I decided to stay home and work on a few projects. I should've listened to my gut, though...because what happened that night was a miracle.

My mom called me after the show and told me that something incredible happened. The girl who was supposed to play Annie got sick during the opening scene. But, there was no understudy! Ellen Benner, a former student and current St. Joan of Arc parishioner and altar server, who was assigned to be a minor character named Margie, was suddenly promoted to the lead...and she nailed it.

After the original Annie bowed out, a storm was brewing backstage. How would the show go on? "Ellen, do you know the words to 'Maybe'?" the exasperated director asked.

"Yes," Ellen said.

"Here! Take this script! Put on this dress! You're on!"

And she was. Obviously, Ellen was nervous, but she was excited, as well, and knew that she was up for the challenge. In the words of Ellen's longtime friend, Emily Fink (who is also an actress), "She took all the eyes and ears of the audience. It was like a Christmas miracle! I don't think anyone I know could have acted or sung in Annie like she did that night!"

Ellen was called to action and she said, "yes," without necessarily knowing how it would all work out. She had faith in herself, in her Theatreworks family, and in God that she could be Annie, and so she said, "yes." I like to believe that the Holy Spirit was working through Ellen as she unexpectedly became the star of the show. My mom said the same thing.

We never know when we are going to be called upon to perform at work, school, on a team, in our families, and in our journeys of faith, and so we must be prepared. We must know the lines, the songs, and the dances that it takes to end up where we want to be so that when it's our turn to shine, we dazzle everyone who can see us.

In this time of Advent, we are not just *waiting* for the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but *preparing* for our role as a member of His Kingdom. "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." By following the script that has been set for us, we can be ready at any moment for the return of Christ.

"Mrs. Barberry, are you coming to the Christmas Concert?" a fifth grade girl asked me a few hours ago.

"I wouldn't miss it for the world," I told her, because you never know when the Holy Spirit is going to show up.