

OUR STORY

Our first introduction to Our Lady of Good Success was from a book written by Marian Horvat Ph. D. titled “Our Lady of Good Success-Prophecies for Our Times”. Upon receiving the book in 1999, I read the book several times;



immediately I began to pray the novena to Our Lady of Good Success. Through reading this book, we came to love Our Lady under this confident title, which points to her future successful triumph over the enemies of God and His Church.

I had numerous favors I was asking to be granted. I will only write about one since so many favors have been granted that they are too numerous to mention. This particular favor is so very connected to Our Lady of Good Success we feel we would be remiss in not including “our story” on this website.

My husband and I have been blessed with two biological sons. These boys were not brought into the world without much suffering. I had many health problems that made pregnancies very difficult and some babies were lost. Anyway, over the years we had always hoped to increase our family. We never ceased to pray about it. Years passed. When I started the novena, adoption was on our minds. Both of us, however, were uneasy about the prospect of bringing a child or children into our happy home since there have been so many horror stories about adoption. We feared that we might not be generous enough to love a child if it was not “flesh of our flesh”. We feared that we would not or could not raise the child correctly. We had much anxiety about it.

I prayed the novena. I began feeling more at ease at the thought of adoption but Dan was not convinced enough. I continued to pray. I remember praying on the Feast of the Annunciation for this intention. I told the Blessed Mother that I could not push my husband into anything—that if she wanted us to adopt she must change his heart -he would have to bring up the subject and be the one to decide that we should adopt.

The next day Dan asked me if I had looked into adoption yet. I said no. He told me that I had better start. Therefore, I did. By April 6, 2000 we were in the first informational meeting; by May, we were in our home study, starting the process of adoption. One of the first things you must do when you start the process is name the country you will be adopting from. We were leaning heavily toward China since my heart has always sympathetic to these little cast asides. Nevertheless, we wanted a sibling group and China just does not have them since they believe in the “one child policy”.

Therefore, I inquired at the adoption agency’s main office. Where should we go? I

knew about Russia's program. What about South America? What did the children look like? Well as I talked to the social worker, South America kept sounding more and more appealing. I told them we were looking for a sibling group and she asked how many. When we started the home study we were asked how many children were we willing to accept. Before I could think, much less reply, Dan blurted out we would take up to four. Well you never say that to an expectant future adoptive mother because that number stuck. And so I said - FOUR! She laughed and replied that she had a picture and history of a sibling group of four right on her desk in front of her — they were called “waiting children, children of promise”. She asked me if I had a fax – I said my sister-in-law did. So she faxed the picture and papers over. I immediately drove over to get the papers. Unfortunately, the picture was not so good. But from what I could tell and read about — there was something special about these children....something familiar...BUT FOUR – oh my goodness! When my brother in law saw the picture, he jokingly asked if we were going to adopt a whole village!!

This was May 17th. I studied the papers. Looking at their names and birthdays, we hoped for a sign from God. The only ‘sign’ I received was Dan saying if I wanted



to adopt them it was fine with him — which wasn't exactly a lightening bolt! However, I do remember looking at the atlas and discovering that since these children were from Colombia, they were only about 500 miles at the most away from Quito, Ecuador where Our Lady of Good Success resides. My thought was that she could very well be leading us to Colombia. We inquired if these children were still adoptable.

We ended having to wait another 2 weeks to find out. We continued to pray to Our Lady of Good Success. On May 31, the Queenship of Mary, we found out that in fact they were adoptable.

As many of you may know, the process of adoption can be a trying and harrowing experience laced with many little trials and tribulations along the way. Fortunately, we saw Our Lady of Good Success guiding us through this adoption right from the start by helping us choose the country from which we would adopt. We were not “approved” for the children until the middle of July. During this waiting period, our social worker played the Devil's Advocate inciting every possible horrific situation that could happen to us if we adopted these children. She had us read books about adopted children who had failed to bond with their adoptive families. How these children destroyed happy homes. She suggested that one or more could have severe mental handicaps, even mental retardation, not to mention physical problems that could surface later.

We continued to pray not doubting that Our Lady was helping us. There were many set backs along the way. However, we did manage to obtain a video of the children that made us feel more confident that these children were for us. Yet our social worker still suggested situations in the negative. As a result, we studied every possible potential problem we could have and all the remedies that deal with correcting these problems. Though we suffered intensely psychologically during

this period, it forced us to prepare for the worst-case scenario. We ended up being determined to adopt them even if they were the naughtiest children that could ever be adopted. We are grateful to our social worker for that trial she put us through for we did the research that was necessary to arm ourselves for the future troubles.

As we progressed into our adoption, I happened to talk with Marian Horvat, the writer of the book on Our Lady of Good Success. When she found out that we were adopting in Colombia she suggested that we first go to Ecuador to see Our Lady of Good Success. I have to admit I was excited. But when I posed this to my husband, he treated me as if I was Lucy Ricardo dreaming up some hair-brained idea ... and the expense was unimaginable — so I was told. Here we were spending \$\$\$ thousands \$\$\$ of dollars on this adoption and I had the audacity to suggest we go to another country beforehand where we knew virtually no one, we spoke no Spanish and the statue was in a cloistered convent for heaven's sake. He asked me if I didn't think it was exciting enough to travel to one of the most dangerous countries in the world to adopt these children. Undaunted, I asked "Ricky" if I could at least check just how expensive this trip would be. Of course, he agreed. Lucy won the first skirmish! Time would tell who would come out the victor.

So the next morning I called the travel agent that handled our adoption travel. I told her about what we wanted to do...go to Quito, Ecuador, then to Manizales, Colombia, then to Bogotá, Colombia. I told her we had been praying very hard for this adoption to be successful. I told her we were thinking of making a thanksgiving pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Success in Quito, Ecuador if all went as it should. She suggested that we first look at how much it cost to fly from Milwaukee to Bogotá and then to Manizales. She checked and gave me the total. The next thing she did was to check how much it would cost to fly with the added trip to Quito, Ecuador first.

As she finished typing in her information on the computer, she let out an expression of surprise and then said, "Well you better keep your prayer book open because something's working... The cost to travel to Quito first is cheaper than to go to straight to Colombia to get the kids!" When I told that to Dan, he got this funny schmirk on his face... He knew just what I was thinking! He had been beaten! There was no fighting the Blessed Mother. Our Lady had cleared a massive objection to this plan and there was no real reason we couldn't go. We both knew Our Lady was calling us there. She had won the battle without even so much as a struggle.

Next, I happened to find a contact in Quito in August. He spoke no English but had a young 16-year-old neighbor boy translate e-mails that I would send him. He expressed his willingness to help us to fulfill our desire to see Our Lady of Good Success. It seemed all we had to do was get the approval to go. We were told by the adoption agency it would be any day now. We waited and waited. Our contact hoped for us to come in October for Our Lady of Good Success is publicly venerated in the La Concepcion Church during that month with much festivity. (Normally, the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Good Success is in Abbess' chair in the upper choir of the cloistered convent, so the public cannot view her.) How anxious he made us! No word came for us to go. There was nothing we could do but

wait and pray for the Blessed Mother to direct us as she saw fit.

I received a picture over the e-mail of the children one day. At this point, every little set back or disappointment suggested that our adoption might never happen. Patience was never a virtue I had in abundance. I decided to send the picture of the children to my contact. I asked him to take it to the Church where Our Lady of Good Success was venerated. I requested he leave the picture somewhere in the church so Our Lady would not forget our pressing need. I received word within a couple of days that in fact, Roberto not only took the picture to the church, but he gave it to the Mother Abbess, and she went and placed the picture on the heart of the statue of Our Lady of Good Success. What joy I felt on that day! I knew then we couldn't fail in our adoption. I knew that soon all would be as we had hoped.

On October 17th - the day after my birthday - we received word that we could come. We could not leave until Nov. 3, the feast of St. Martin de Porres - patron saint of South America. Since we were not able to visit in the month of October, our contact implied that we may not be able to get permission to see the statue if we came in November. We told him it was too late now, we're coming any way! Meet us at the Quito Airport! So we left for South America not knowing for sure, if we would even be able to see the one we so hoped to visit — Our Lady of Good Success!

My husband, Dan, my son Mike, and I left the Milwaukee with a compilation of suitcases and carry-ons. We looked like we were moving to South America – in a way we were. The process of adoption, in Colombia, takes four to eight weeks. We were informed before we left that we would be in a hotel with the four children for at least four weeks. We had to bring clothing for ourselves and the four new additions to our family along with toys, games, coloring books, etc. to keep this Spanish-speaking family of four entertained for the 30-long-day haul.

The flight was uneventful. We arrived in the Quito Airport at 10:30 p.m. We experienced a bit of a culture shock that night. With none of us being fluent in Spanish, we were at a loss at where to go or what to do. We stood with our huge mound of luggage in the airport terminal gaping at the crowds of Spanish-speaking people for a few minutes. With my pathetic use of broken Spanish, I then attempted to try to get some assistance as to where to go to meet our contact. I failed miserably — well at least I managed to get a smile out of my family members' faces.



We decided to go with the flow out the main entrance past armed guards in green military uniforms, past a long row of steel bars that looked strikingly similar to ones you see in prisons. Through these bars, the natives were clamoring in Spanish. To say the least, it was all a bit unsettling. Despite this Ecuadorian pandemonium, I managed to breathe a silent prayer we would find our South American contact, Roberto, and soon. Thoughts raced through my mind — what if our contact wasn't there or we couldn't pick him out of the crowd? — After all, these Ecuadorians all

looked the same especially in the dark. — What if we couldn't find a hotel. What if...what if...???

As we continued now into the midst of the crowd — steel bars no longer separating us from the natives... I heard my name — very faint yet distinct — even if he did mispronounce it. “Cat-y?” he said. I had never welcomed the sound of someone mispronouncing my name as I did that moment. We were all flooded with a sense of relief. Our contact had not failed us. We soon discovered we had a major communication barrier. All we could do after the “mucho gusto’s” was smile at each other rather uncomfortably. I did manage to ask Roberto whether we would be able to see Our Lady of Good Success. His reply was a Spanish “maybe”.

We loaded all of our suitcases into two taxis – well they weren't actually taxis as such, more like rather large jeep-type vehicles. We traveled through the southern part of the city to our sleeping quarters. We wondered where Roberto had reserved a room for us. As we approached the dazzling tower of the Marriot in Quito, my husband's eyes lit up. I inconspicuously nudged him and gave him a facial expression to indicate the negative. Poor husband of mine! What I was putting him through! We passed the Marriot to Dan's great disappointment.

We continued on as the neighborhood started looking a little bit rougher — even in the dark. Finally, we stopped in front of some rather large looming wrought iron gates. The building behind it was hard to make out. It was a rather dark, gloomy, foreboding looking place in the moonlight but it was to be ‘home’ for us during our short stay in Quito. As we entered the foyer of this hotel, we struggled to focus our eyes as the 40-watt lights that “illuminated” the entry dimmed regularly in 5-minute intervals. We discovered this was a “renovated” convent.



We were led up a dark stairway through numerous hallways decorated with large mirrors (I don't know about you, but dark hallways with mirrors really give me the willies — I was afraid to look in them for fear of what I might see). I was amazed at all the interconnecting passageways — some more like crawl spaces. We arrived at our room. Here again this room had been “renovated” complete with another flickering 40-watt light bulb dangling from the center of the room, windows with no screens (common in South America), and cheap oil- on- velvet paintings of anorexic-depressed, sunken-eyed children. We tried to remind ourselves we were on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Success as we readied ourselves for bed by bed checking for four, six, or 8-legged creatures of South America. We were relieved not to find any - we actually didn't bother to examine too closely closets or corners for we were hoping to get some sleep and we were afraid we'd actually find something there. My last thought as I drifted off to sleep was that I hoped I wouldn't hear any chains rattling or moans from any deceased sister that may be doing purgatorial penances round about the convent halls and passageways.

We awoke to the crowing of the roosters. Now that would not be so unusual if we

were in a country setting but we were in downtown Quito. Roberto was to meet us for our tour of old Quito so we ate a quick breakfast and waited for him. Roberto had a taxi waiting for us; we hopped in and headed out for an exciting day of touring with our friendly Ecuadorian guide we couldn't understand. Of course, one of my first questions I posed to Roberto was whether we would be able to in fact accomplish what we had set out to do — namely visit Our Lady of Good Success. Once again, we were given a smile and a “maybe”.

We hadn't gotten two blocks when the taxi driver stopped unexpectedly and motioned for the four of us to get out. The three Americans in the taxi found it rather odd. But we soon discovered that our driver had run out of gas — a common occurrence there in Quito. “No problema!” We would just hail another taxi. Hopefully, we would pick one with a full tank this time. I couldn't help but ponder what would happen to a taxi driver in NYC if he let his car run out of gas during rush hour traffic. We were quickly discovering that life was very different here in Ecuador. We did find another taxi that took us to dwelling place of Our Lady of Good Success, La Concepcion Church, to pray.

As you may recall the statue resides in the Cloistered convent there and it was no longer October so we had to get permission to enter into the convent. We hadn't



gotten permission yet. So there we knelt, so close and yet so far. You can imagine what I prayed for that day! We did also take pictures. About 10 a.m. we set out to meet Roberto's neighbor, Estaban. He joined us to help with the communication problem, which by then was getting very discouraging. We walked around most of the old part of Quito -- the square and cathedral. We saw most all of the beautiful churches in the area and there were many to see. ALL had miraculous stories attributed to them - many of which seem to have apparitions of the Blessed Mother associated with them. We soon realized La Concepcion Church was comparatively one of the poorest churches in

the surrounding area – less ornamentation and design than the rest — also not kept up as well as the others. However, by American standards, it was a highly ornate church.

We had a wonderful day of touring minus the disappointment of not being able to accomplish our mission as of yet. At the day's end, I broached the topic with our young interpreter. We were able to ascertain that “mañana,” the very last day of our visit, we MIGHT be able to see the Virgin. The idea of a less-than-definite “yes” was beginning to make me extremely anxious but all we could do was leave everything in the hands of the Blessed Mother. I began to have little doubts of the purpose of our trip creeping into my mind. However, I had quick recourse to her, she who can intercede for us. After all, weren't we going to visit Our Lady of Good Success? How could she let us down and make our trip look like a failure? When we arrived back at our hotel, we found that there were other people hoping to catch a glimpse of Our Lady of Good Success also. We were not alone. That alone gave me hope again.

We were to meet in the lobby at 8:30 a.m. the next day. Roberto was to arrange travel to the church. We were all a little excited and we were down in the lobby earlier than the scheduled time. We waited nervously for Roberto. At 8:45 a.m., one of the other men that we had previously met the night before was getting nervous and didn't want to wait any longer. He asked us if we wanted hail a taxi together, go along with him to La Conception church, and wait for Roberto there. We agreed.

We arrived at the church as the sisters were chanting their prayers. Their singing relaxed me a bit and I got the feeling we were a bit early. Roberto arrived ten minutes later. I could scarcely contain myself. Was this finally the day? Would we get permission? Roberto walked up to the grate in the front of the church and spoke with someone. After what seemed like an eternity, he motioned for us to come. We were to be admitted to the convent for a visit and a tour! Our Lady had heard our prayers! She was awaiting our visit.

Mother Abbess of the Conceptionist Convent was the one who greeted us with kind smiling eyes and a sweet demeanor. She directed us up to the choir loft where the majestic Lady resides. It is very hard to put into words what one exactly feels when you have reached the culmination of a spiritual journey such as this. I had many thoughts race through my mind. This pilgrimage was not like so many others such as Lourdes or Fatima. There they have millions of people coming every year to visit these holy places. This pilgrimage was so solemn, so ethereal. I imagined that a shepherd at the First Christmas or a camel boy at the Epiphany must have experienced similar feelings as we did on that day. After all, here we were at a place so hidden from the material world — a holy place unknown to most of the Catholic world even. Why we had been allowed this extraordinary grace of visiting with Our Lady of Good Success in the year of Our Lord, 2000 AD God only knows?



As we all knelt before her and her Infant Son, I could barely even remember how to pray. All I could do was gaze at the statue and commend all of my life's problems, my hopes and fears, my needs and those of my family and friends into her hands. I thanked her for leading us to our adoption, for our additions to our family we had yet to meet and of course for directing us to this holy place of pilgrimage. I asked her for the singular grace to be a good and wise mother to these children I knew nothing about. Finally, I pledged my allegiance and my life to her under that lovely title of Our Lady of Good Success. I made a solemn promise that I would work towards the end of seeing her be made known in the United States and beyond.

After our prayers, I asked the Mother Abbess, through our translator, if she would touch a linen cloth to the statue, which she agreed to do most graciously. I also asked if she could touch our rosaries to the statue. She motioned for me to join her and she led me up some rather rickety stairs to the pedestal where Our Lady rested. I don't know how many people in



the world have been given the gift of actually touching something the Archangels and Saints have made but I counted myself as being in the minority! Now by the grace of God may I live up to such a fortuitous grace and honor!



We were directed to worship Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament there in the choir loft. I felt remiss in not recognizing His Presence immediately as there was a red lamp present. We paid our respects and expressed our gratitude to the King of the Conceptionist Convent as well.

We reluctantly left the choir loft to tour the rest of the grounds. The Mother Abbess rang a large bell as we walked through the convent. I couldn't help but consider myself a leper – a worldly secular leper capable of endangering and infecting the unsullied virginal souls of these sanctified grounds. We walked through the convent garden, which was being renovated at that time. Through the exterior corridors we reverently passed until we reached the crypt of Mother Marianna de Jesus Torres and the other founding sisters. We found them displayed in a glass case Unfortunately the good bishop of Quito has decided that a black hood over the heads and feet of these saintly sisters is a fitting adornment for the blessed ones who lie incorrupt in their tomb. We asked to have our rosaries touched to their holy remains but that was not allowed.

We had heard of the stories of these incorrupt sisters – how at one time they were kept in beds in one room and the cleaning lady affectionately referred to them as “her sleeping beauties.” We have heard that there are 13 of these “sleeping beauties” there at the convent. May one day in the not so distant future, God see fit to unveil these blessed ones for the entire world to see, that they might manifest the deep spirituality this convent has contained for all of these hundreds of years.

We were also shown a weeping picture of Mary that had recently wept about six months before we visited there. One could see the streaks where the tears had flowed down her cheeks. What marvels were contained in these humble walls of stucco! It reminds me of the Bible quotation ...“Eye has not seen nor ear has heard...” What gifts God has bestowed upon this convent! Oh, how little we understand the workings of God.

Before we left I promised the Mother Abbess that I would do all humanly possible to propagate the devotion to Our Lady of Good Success. She gave me prayers and a novena in Spanish along with some medals to help me get started. We left content that we had accomplished our pilgrimage. Little did we know that our pilgrimage had just begun...our mission has yet to be completed.

Heading to Colombia to adopt our new children I felt as if God gave us the grace to endure the unknown of adopting four older children (Andres-age 10, Valentina-age 6, Laura -age 5, Luisa- age 3). For me, this is the miracle Our Lady of Good Success had accomplished in us. She helped us conquer all of our fears, our weaknesses, our selfishness, our insufficiencies. She has filled in the space our “humanness” could never fill. She is truly a spiritual mother who has watched over these children. She continues to do so. Our adoption agency has a special term for children who have difficulty finding families. These children were called “children

of promise...” It means that these children are children of great potential – of wonderful possibilities — that is, given the right chance – the right conditions. We hope and pray that it has a spiritual meaning as well.

Through all of the ups and downs of our adoption, we felt Our Lady’s guiding hand even in the darkest of times. She gave us hope and increased our faith in God and in His Church. May we continue to receive these great and powerful graces of her help... May we never lose it.

May our story help you and many others find their way to Our Lady of Good Success.

And remember that when life seems to be more than you can handle and your soul is immersed in doubt and grief, turn to Our Lady and say:

“Star of the stormy sea of my mortal life, may your light shine upon me so that I may not stray from the path that leads me to heaven.”

(Taken from the last testament of Mother Marianna)

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