

My Year of Miracles

by Alia Sisson

Alia Elizabeth *Faustina* Sisson will make a Profession of Faith in the Catholic Church and receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist on Epiphany Sunday, January 7, 2018 at St. Francis Xavier Church. We welcome Alia into Full Communion with the Catholic Church!

This essay was originally written for “The New Wine Press,” the online journal of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.



The year of our Lord 2017 was a year of immense and tremendous change for me. It stands as a testament, not to my own strength, but to the power of God to work through broken people. He writes straight with crooked lines. At the beginning of this year, I was underemployed, fighting depression, and feeling directionless. I had lost my spark.

Little did I know, one choice would end up changing my entire life for the better. I started going to Mass on a regular basis. For Catholics, this is standard operating procedure. But this was pretty radical for a Presbyterian! Having attended two years of Catholic grade school and three years at the Marianist University of Dayton, I still had never pictured myself going to Mass *by choice*.

A candlelit midnight Christmas Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral in Columbus, Ohio inspired me to keep coming back. Slowly learning the ancient Mass opened my eyes to the sacredness contained in everyday living. During Lent, I grew more devout and began going to daily Mass and praying the rosary. I also gave up alcohol, which, for someone who adored wine as much as I did, felt like a big sacrifice. As distractions fell away, throughout those 40 days, I developed a real relationship with God.

By the time Easter arrived, I knew I was ready to convert. As much as I loved attending Mass, I yearned to be in full communion with the church and receive the Eucharist at Christ’s table with my brothers and sisters. Rather than feel like an outsider, I wanted to experience the sacramental graces as a full-fledged Roman Catholic. Nonetheless, I had to wait until September until RCIA classes began.

Although I could not partake in Holy Communion, I grew closer to God in adoration every week. One hot summer evening, still unsuccessful at finding a good job, I prostrated myself on the floor of my favorite adoration chapel and begged God to open a door for me. I prayed over and over, “Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders / Let me walk upon the water / Wherever you would call me.”

I did not expect God to take my request so literally. The next morning I received an email from Tim, the Volunteer Director of Missionaries of the Precious Blood, inviting me to apply to be a volunteer in Kansas City, Missouri. I finally had an opportunity to grow “where my trust is without borders.” After a quick Google search to make sure Kansas City wasn’t totally lame, I called back with a surge of joy. I applied, interviewed, and was accepted into the volunteer program the next month.

In September, I packed two suitcases and flew to Kansas City to start my year of service with the Precious Blood Volunteers. More than a few times, the thought crossed my mind, “what on earth am I doing, picking up and moving to the middle of the country where I don’t know a soul?” Despite momentary flashes of doubt, my overall feeling was a deep sense of peace. Once I met Tim and my fellow volunteers, I knew I was right where I belonged.

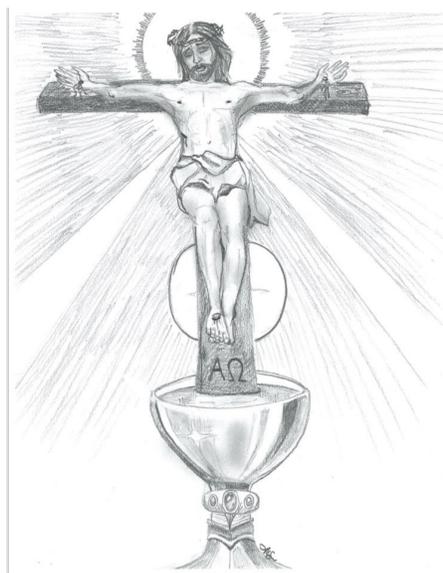
Community living with great volunteers and two amazing priests in a ten-bedroom Tudor home is *absolutely* as fantastic as it sounds. But even more perfect is my volunteer position at Legal Aid of Western Missouri (LAWMO). Having invested three years of blood, sweat, and tears in law school, this gave me the perfect opportunity to use the skills I have, and gain indispensable knowledge for my future practice.

I consider myself so privileged to be the first Precious Blood Volunteer placed at LAWMO. My job now is to assist the Domestic Team in obtaining full orders of protection, child custody, and dissolution of marriage for domestic violence victims who cannot afford a private attorney. This position has given me a new sense of purpose in helping those who have been victimized by society transform into powerful survivors. Talk about redemption!

Sometimes being a volunteer isn’t easy. We do not have a lot of spending money, but that has turned into a blessing itself. Instead of buying things to be happy, we share our time, talent, and stories – and that is more than enough. Especially interacting with the clients I serve, I have never been more appreciative of a home cooked meal, a roof over my head, and knowing I live in a safe place. I also just celebrated my ninth month of sobriety.

I am thrilled to be welcomed into full communion with the Catholic Church on Epiphany Sunday: January 7, 2018. This day is especially meaningful to me, not only as the day before my birthday, but also as the feast day of Saint Gaspar! There is no better present than being welcomed home into the church that awakened my soul.

Over the last year, the Lord has performed nothing less than a miracle in my life. Through His mercy, I went from hopeless to hopeful, purposeless to purpose-driven, from bondage to freedom. I will continue to keep an open mind and heart as the next chapter of God’s plan unfolds. Through Him all things are possible.



Alia drew this as she prepared for her First Communion.