

Dear Friends of One More Soul,

Joe and Christine began their marriage willing to accept every child God would send them, and trusting totally in His spiritual and material support in that generous decision. They surely knew that if God responds with equal generosity, there will be great joy, many twists and turns, some sadness, and a substantial need for sacrifice. Christine tells their story!

## MISSION Most Wonderful, Our testimony of trust

Nov 6, 2014

Each married couple is called into a cooperative mission with GOD. It is up to them to discover what that mission is. It has been such a blessing for my husband and me to receive 11 gifts of life. We always believed that being open to life was healthy and that God would help us feed, clothe and provide for as many children as we received. This agreement/commitment from the beginning of our marriage removed a ton of fear, doubt, over thinking, and stress from our life. Our mission was to grow a healthy family.

We could never have predicted the crazy turns and tests we would face as we joyfully seemed to announce a new family member every two years or so. Occasionally I cried with a new pregnancy just because I wasn't surrounded by supportive people, but my husband assured me it was all good and "we could do it"! "WE" being the operative word! Each birth was a real celebration! I got bolder with do-gooders who dropped their jaws or gasped when they found out how many children we had. We learned to laugh a lot!!

After a miscarriage with our 9th blessing we clung to our faith and realized how fragile life was. We weren't sure if there would be any more babies? We didn't "need another child" but we assured each other and God that we were still open and willing to trust HIS timing. Our little MaryClaire came into the world in August of 2006. Joe and I were 42. Our oldest son was 20. Turns out we did need another child and God knew it!

In 2007 we began discerning moving our family to a new town—to live in, and help run a homeless mission. We let go of all job and insurance security and Joe became the Executive Director of a shelter, free clinic and food bank. ALL of us, 9 kids and parents, worked together serving the needs of others. This was a very positive experience. We loved it. Our family thrived and blossomed.

Boom! 2012 my husband's minor health issues snowballed into major health issues. In March 2014 he's finally diagnosed with Lyme disease. We all pitched in to keep the mission running. He begins aggressive treatments, becoming bedridden, riddled with pain, and loses his ability to focus or concentrate.

My mother becomes very ill in April, and dies in June. She was our champion, prayer warrior and full time cheerleader!

### Another challenge to face.

In July 2014, Joe sees some windows of health with IV therapy. We have some positive moments and become optimistic. Not to last though as he develops blood clots, has to come off Lyme

treatment, essentially starting over. Strong oral meds caused Liver and Kidney problems. Come on GOD...what's up with all of this?!!



Boom! At 50 years old and being sure it's a not-so-funny menopausal trick, we have a positive pregnancy test!!! Second test....still positive. I announce pregnancy during a family game of Pictionary/Charades...my husband is rendered speechless!!! Images of Zechariah dance in my head. We are over the moon afraid to get too excited, but bursting with joy!! In the midst of suffering God has permitted new life and celebration!!!! ...What's up with all of this?!!

Boom! On August 19, 2014, Joe is fired—no warning, discussions or transition—due to his health, it appears. Given six hours' notice, we have 30 days to relocate with no income, a desperately sick husband, fragile pregnancy, no money....and I mean NO savings or cash flow. We lived simply like those we served for 8 years, trusting God every day. Now we have become homeless and needy. Hey God, what's up with this!?

Our parish gave us an empty rectory; friends and strangers have provided a steady flow of support. Meals, food, clothing, transportation, appliances, gift cards and all kinds of tokens of love have made their way to our door. God is loving us through His people! Our children are blanketed with goodness, kindness, and learning to receive many blessings. We are learning to forgive and persevere.

We know that many in this world would shake their finger and say you shouldn't have had so many children; you shouldn't be having another; you shouldn't have given up security to give your lives to a non-profit serving others; etc, etc... But, in our Catholic

world we don't hear those words; we seek affirmation; we express trust, love and faith in our God who has it all under "control".

We go about our life, living without fear, allowing others to see our human imperfections and allowing the world to see our joy.

We share all of this to affirm couples! With age comes wisdom. Sometimes with age comes baby! "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5) Pray for all families to find their mission and thrive in peace and love!!

Please pray for our family.

At 20 weeks, baby is an active mover and we are trying out names. A special ultra sound next week will look for "fetal abnormalities". We pray for solutions if there are challenges; we pray for grace and humility to accept whatever may come.

God is good and present in all our joys and all our sorrows. May all couples find the support and love they need to embrace their gifts, from their families, friends and from the Church, as we have. May you find your mission and seize it!

God will provide. We are truly blessed!

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### Update December 29, 2014

Dear Steve,

We were blessed with many gifts and gestures of love this Christmas. Over many years we have befriended this special Mall Santa. He is a retired Sheriff's Deputy from California and has become a good friend. He prays for us and we for him. He is the baby of his family with 7 older SISTERS! He and I compared bellies and the girls sang a beautiful *Silent Night* which made him cry alligator tears. The boys did a rousing Rudolph and we got applause from the Mall crowd! (PS Santa paid for our photo this year knowing of our situation!)

Our faith community surrounded us with love and kindness this Christmas; we received prayers, and gifts to lift our hearts and truly sustain our basic needs, as well as provide fun toys and luxury items from St. Nick. We enjoyed company with old and new friends. We played and prayed like never before. Our oldest daughter Bridget cantered for Mass on Christmas Eve and led the Community in beautiful Carols.

We shared our December 2nd interview with Steve on Maria Radio—[radiomaria.us/questforlife/](http://radiomaria.us/questforlife/)—with friends who were inspired to share it with others and we have been blessed with

even more encouragement and new friends! God is good.

Joe's health remains precarious. He is following all directions and advice. Mental fog, fatigue, and excruciating pain head to toe are daily crosses for him. He offers this up for his pre-born son, his marriage and our other children, so he's working hard!

Our baby boy has a NAME! He is Owen Joseph Geniesse! A trip to Children's Hospital in Milwaukee fills us with hope for Owen's little heart.

His defect is significant, but Doctors believe it is repairable with open heart surgery. Such a gift! Having hope is the best Christmas present ever! We expect delivery in Milwaukee; there are lots of unknowns, but God will be with us and we trust.

Owen's name comes from St. Nicholas Owen, a religious who was renowned for his carpentry skills at building priest hiding holes in Manors and estates during Catholic persecutions. Some of his handiwork still exists and he is credited with saving hundreds of priests. Owen means little fighter or young warrior...a fitting tag for our son who must fight for his life.

We have no financial plan for the future. Each day we are more dependent than the day before, waiting for disability classification or healing. Wondering how we will manage in the New Year and with our baby's special needs but at our center we are certain GOD WILL PROVIDE. We hope and we TRUST.

Blessings on all who pray for us, your love is a powerful force; we are grateful.

Peace!

Christine and Joe and Family: Ben, Bridget, Hannah, Joey, Erin, Marty, Patrick, Samuel, MaryClaire and Owen Joseph Geniesse!