

# Going home — a Rite of Acceptance story



Jaime arrived early and met his friend, Bill, who was standing on the steps outside the tall wooden doors. They rubbed their arms and hands to warm themselves as parishioners began to filter by into the church. The minutes ticked by as the church filled. Jaime wondered if they'd stand outside much longer. Bill patted Jaime on the shoulder and assured him everything was on schedule.

Then, the doors burst open! Jamie saw Alex Johnson's daughter carrying the cross and it seemed like the entire congregation was right behind her. They were singing something as they flowed around and behind and beside and in front of him. Fr. Tom moved through the crowd and was standing right by the cross, a few inches from Jaime's face.

"Bill," boomed Fr. Tom, "please tell us about your friend!"

## **There are no strangers in the RCIA**

Bill introduced Jamie to the parishioners, which seemed odd since he'd been attending Mass for a couple of years. And Bill mentioned that, saying, "Many of you already know Jaime and have been praying with him and for him for a long time now. Today is the day he wants to formally enter our community."

"Jaime," Fr. Tom said, "what are you hoping for from this community?"

Jaime was silent for a moment. He knew what he wanted. Bill and other members of the RCIA team had been discussing that very question with him for weeks. But he wasn't expecting Fr. Tom to ask him right now, in front of everyone.

Bill squeezed support into Jaime's shoulder and whispered, "Just say what's in your heart."

"I am hoping this will be my home," said Jaime. "I want a community of friends who accept me for who I am."

Then then Alex Johnson's daughter took a step forward, and Bill took Jaime's hands and wrapped them around the cross.

## Welcome home

Fr. Tom put his hands on top of Bill's and Jaime's and said, "Jaime, *this* is home. Find in this cross a community of friends. Find in Jesus complete love and acceptance. You have followed God's light, and the way of the Gospel now lies open before you. Walk in the light of Christ from this day forward. Commit yourself to his care and learn to believe in him with all your heart."

"This is the way of faith. This is the way home. This is that path to true friendship. This is the promise of acceptance. Are you prepared to begin this journey in Christ?"

"I am," said Jaime, holding back tears.

Fr. Tom asked something else of the crowd, but Jaime couldn't really focus. All he heard was a roaring, "We are!" as they answered him. And then they started singing again. Jaime could see many of their faces, and they all blurred into one face. A community face, eyes filled with love, a smile like his mother's.

Someone was touching his forehead. And now his ears. His eyes, lips, chest, shoulders, hands. Everyone was singing. Bill, with his bad hip, was *kneeling*, touching Jaime's feet. Bill struggled to stand, and Jaime reached down to grab his arm. Fr. Tom said something, and everyone started to move. Now Bill grabbed Jaime's arm and guided him to the front of the procession, right behind the cross. Through the door.

Jaime had been through that door many times, but today it was different. Today, he was going home.