



Whenever Joseph is called the “guardian of Jesus,” it inspires me to think of the countless children who have been adopted: those precious children of God who were ushered into a family who loved them regardless of how they entered. With that in mind, back in the late 1930s, Elaine was born in Pittsburgh, and at six months of age, she was adopted by James and Nancy. They already had a son of their own, who was 11 at the time. Elaine would spend most of her adult years impacting the nearby neighborhood of Latrobe,

Pennsylvania, for the better; the place she called home. She volunteered at the hospital and the Presbyterian church, but her biggest passion of all was art. She was self-taught mostly; took some classes around the area, and mostly painted scenes, objects, and people from her daily life.

So, Elaine went on to co-found the Latrobe Arts Center, and there are only two paintings considered to be permanent exhibitions: one from the other co-founder, and one from Elaine herself. It isn't anything overly eye-catching or mesmerizing. It is of a barn, painted in muted grays with a red silo, and a tree without leaves in front. However, even in the work's simplicity, there remains a soothing peacefulness about it. As if the painting can somehow transport you to a place away from the chaos and stress and endless to-do lists of daily life, to a place of calm serenity. To give just the needed holy dose of harmony, before walking back out the door to whatever is needed to be done next.

Elaine did not turn out to be the most famous person from Latrobe or nearby Pittsburgh, to say the least. But so many cherished her smile and hope and dedication in helping people discover their own creativity at whatever skill level, that they may share the beauty of this earth and God's love with as many people as possible: not just the ones who walk into an art gallery, but all those who would come into their life. Elaine could relate quite well to Joseph, not just in the sense of being adopted by someone who was not their biological parent, but a willingness to not be so interested in personal fame and glory. To know that both Joseph and Elaine had something to offer to those who needed their time and gifts and self-sacrificing love, and they did so with all they had to muster. Most of which from Joseph and Elaine, as well, we will never know the fullest extent.

No, she was no where near the fame and glory as was the case for that eleven-year-old boy, who instantly became her brother when the infant Elaine was brought into the family home. That young man would soon achieve a level of stardom for decades on television screens across this country and throughout the world. After all, Elaine's brother would become better known as none other than Mister Rogers. She would appear on two of the episodes, but she still much preferred to leave the popularity to Fred. Instead, she would remain focused on improving *her own neighborhood* of Latrobe.

And although the church celebrates Joseph today, many devoted viewers of a beloved show will remember that tomorrow would have been Fred Rogers' 95th birthday. However, today is a reminder to give thanks for the saints who are not as well known; to give thanks for the parental figures in our

lives who never garnered a worldwide audience. Although Joseph has his fair share of recognition, it is safe to say he doesn't receive quite the same level of attention as Mary when the few stories about him are brought up in the church every December. He may not have been the father of Jesus, and yet, he was. And I have a feeling he unleashed just as much love in caring for that precious child, just as much dedication in raising him in his youth, just as much insisting of a father-to-son bond regardless of the baby's divine status. I have a feeling Joseph was not at all interested in the fame and glory of it all, and just went on loving Jesus as a son anyway.

Elaine wasn't interested in the fame and glory of it all, either. The one painting of hers still hanging is not to going to receive the same level of art critic praise as those of Rembrandt or Van Gogh or Monet, but in its utter simplicity, and in her utter simplicity of service to a neighborhood, there can still be soul-soothing hope and new life. And during this season of Lent, we are reminded that we do not need to reach a perfect level of artistry with our eating habits or prayer life or whatever discipline we Christians attempt to master for 40 days. In the end, sometimes in the utter simplicity of compassion and care extended to one another, the life-altering love of Jesus Christ is brought to fruition. The very life-altering love that led God to adopt all of us into a most wonderful embrace that will never be taken away. And for the saints, for the parental figures in our lives, including those who will never be known by the rest, for those servants of God who will never let us forget that Greatest News, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!

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