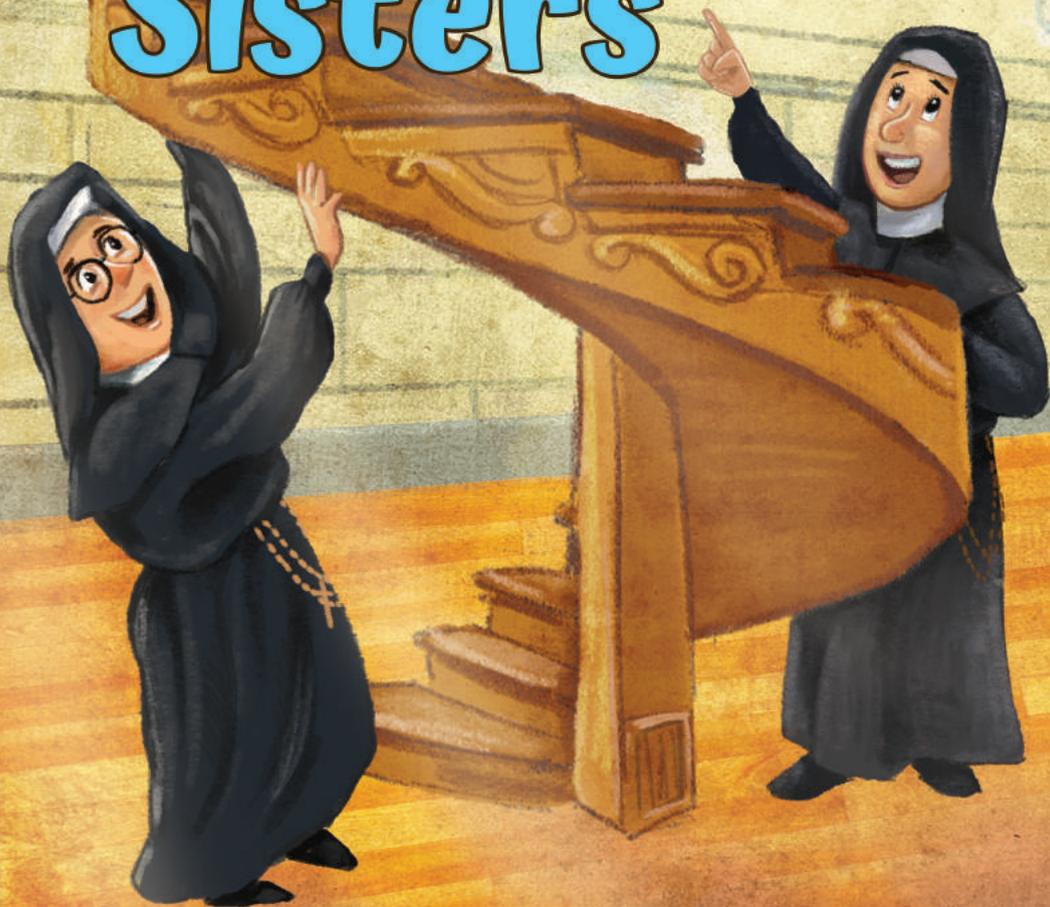


A Story of Prayer and Saint Joseph

Staircase for the Sisters



Written by Pamela Love Illustrated by John Joseph

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for the
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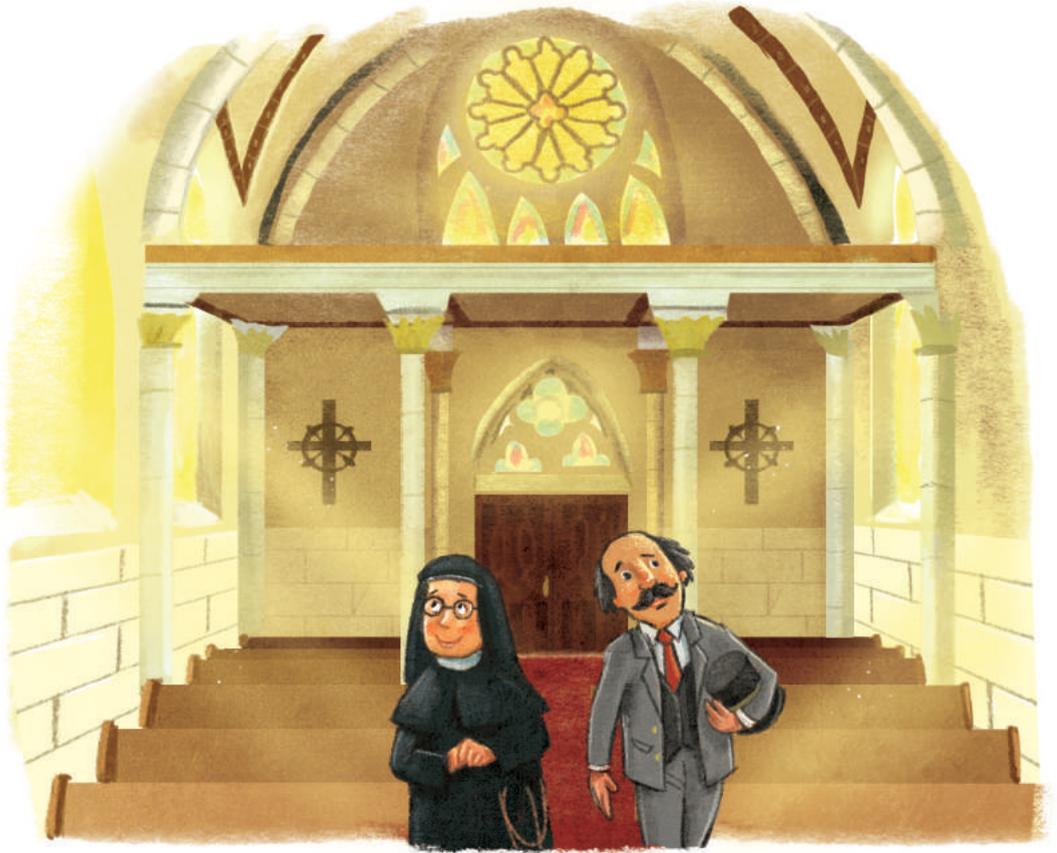
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Many years ago in New Mexico, there was a school called the Academy of Our Lady of Light. Beside this school stood a beautiful new chapel. But this chapel was missing something important.



At first the school's principal, Mother Magdalene, didn't notice. As she and the builder walked through the new chapel, Mother Magdalene smiled at the polished altar, the colorful windows, and the rows of pews.

"What a wonderful place to worship," she said.

"Yes, it is," the builder agreed, not meeting her eyes.



Mother Magdalene looked up at the choir loft, a balcony where the Sisters of Loretto would stand above the congregation to sing. *We'll give glory to God up there*, she thought.

Then she looked again. "Where is the staircase?" she asked.



Sighing, the builder looked down at his feet. "I'm afraid there isn't one," he said. "The architect that Bishop Lamy hired didn't put a staircase in the plans."

"Then how shall we reach the choir loft?" Mother Magdalene asked.

"Could you use a ladder, Mother?" the builder asked hopefully.

"No, that wouldn't be safe." The principal smoothed her habit's long black skirt, which trailed on the floor. "We must have a staircase."

"But there's no room for one," he said.



So Mother Magdalene asked other carpenters. All of them agreed that more room was needed in order to add stairs. “Could we tear down a wall? Or take out some pews?” they asked.

The principal shook her head. “We need all those seats. Besides, we don’t have the money to pay for such big changes now.”



The sisters were glum when they learned about the balcony.

“Such a fine place to sing, and only twenty-two feet away,” Mother Magdalene told them.

“Without a staircase, it might as well be twenty-two miles,” another sister said and sighed.

“Sisters, this is the city of Santa Fe. That means ‘holy faith’ in Spanish. Faith is one thing we have plenty of,” the principal said. “Tomorrow we shall begin a novena to Saint Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters.”

The sisters nodded.

“With heaven’s guidance, someone will help us,” Mother Magdalene declared.

In the morning for the next nine days, they bowed their heads and prayed together in the chapel.

“Dear Saint Joseph, protector of Mary and Jesus and patron of carpenters, we ask for your help. Pray for us. We need a staircase to our choir loft so that we may give glory to God in song. We are told it cannot be built, but we know nothing is impossible with God. We ask for your intercession and we trust in God’s will. Amen.”

