

#2

THE ADVENTURES OF
NICK & SAM



**Hidden
Treasures**

Paul McCusker



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE®

CHAPTER ONE



The New School Year

It was the first day of school and the Perry family was in a panic. Ten-year-old Lizzy was missing her pencils because she had been drawing with them the day before and couldn't remember where they were. Eight-year-old Nick spilled pancake syrup on the white shirt of his school uniform. His twin sister Sam couldn't get her hair tied back properly because the ribbon broke. Andrew, the oldest at twelve, was caught wearing his sneakers

rather than the new school shoes that his Mom had bought for him.

The clock ticked away toward the 7:55 start time. Sam was worried. She didn't want to be late for their first day in a new school.

Sam went out to the family minivan in the garage and climbed in the back seat. She placed her backpack onto the floor at her feet. It was full of subject notebooks and a small bag of writing supplies.

None of the Perry kids had ever attended a Catholic school before. The last school year was spent in a public school in Denver. Then they moved to Hope Springs early in the summer.

Sam felt butterflies flitting around in her stomach. She pressed her hands against her white school shirt and plaid skirt. The skirt was navy blue and had thin lines of green and yellow and white woven through the blue. She wore white socks and black shoes.

Sam remembered how Nick had complained when he found out about the uniforms. They didn't wear uniforms at their old school.

Their mom explained that uniforms stopped kids from teasing others about whose clothes were better. Uniforms made all the kids equal.

Sam didn't mind the uniforms. She thought they looked nice.

Lizzy got in the minivan and sat down next to Sam. "They had fallen in the couch," she said brightly.

"What did?" Sam asked.

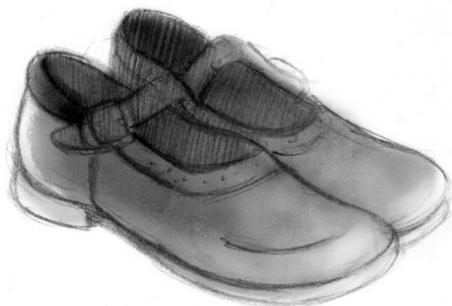
"My pencils," said Lizzy. She dropped her backpack on the side of the seat.

"We're going to be late," Sam said.

"I'll bet a lot of people will be late," Lizzy said.

The rest of the family got into the minivan in a wild rush.

"Ready?" Mr. Perry asked as he started the engine.



The clock on the dashboard lit up. It was 7:45.

“Will we be on time?” Sam asked.

“We’re five minutes away,” her dad said. “Remember? The school is right next to the church.”

They drove in silence. Andrew kept fiddling with the laces on his new shoes.

Sam saw her father look at them in the rearview mirror. “Let’s pray,” he said.

They each made the Sign of the Cross.

“Heavenly Father,” Mr. Perry said, “we give you thanks for bringing us safely to this new day. Thank you for a new school year. We pray that you will give us clear minds, pure hearts, and

the grace to get along with everyone we meet.”

He was silent for a moment. Then he began the Our Father. The rest of the family joined in. They were almost at the school by the time they said “Amen.”

“You see?” Mrs. Perry said. “Hope Springs isn’t very big.”

“We could ride our bikes to school,” Lizzy said.

Mr. Perry pulled into the school’s parking lot. “Normally we’ll drop you off at the door,” he said. “But it’s the first day, so we’ll walk you in.”

The family grabbed their backpacks and got out of the minivan. A big banner over the main doors said, “Welcome to St. Clare of Assisi Catholic School.”

Sam remembered that Saint Clare of Assisi was a friend of Saint Francis of Assisi a long, long time ago. She started a religious group of women who gave up everything they owned and helped

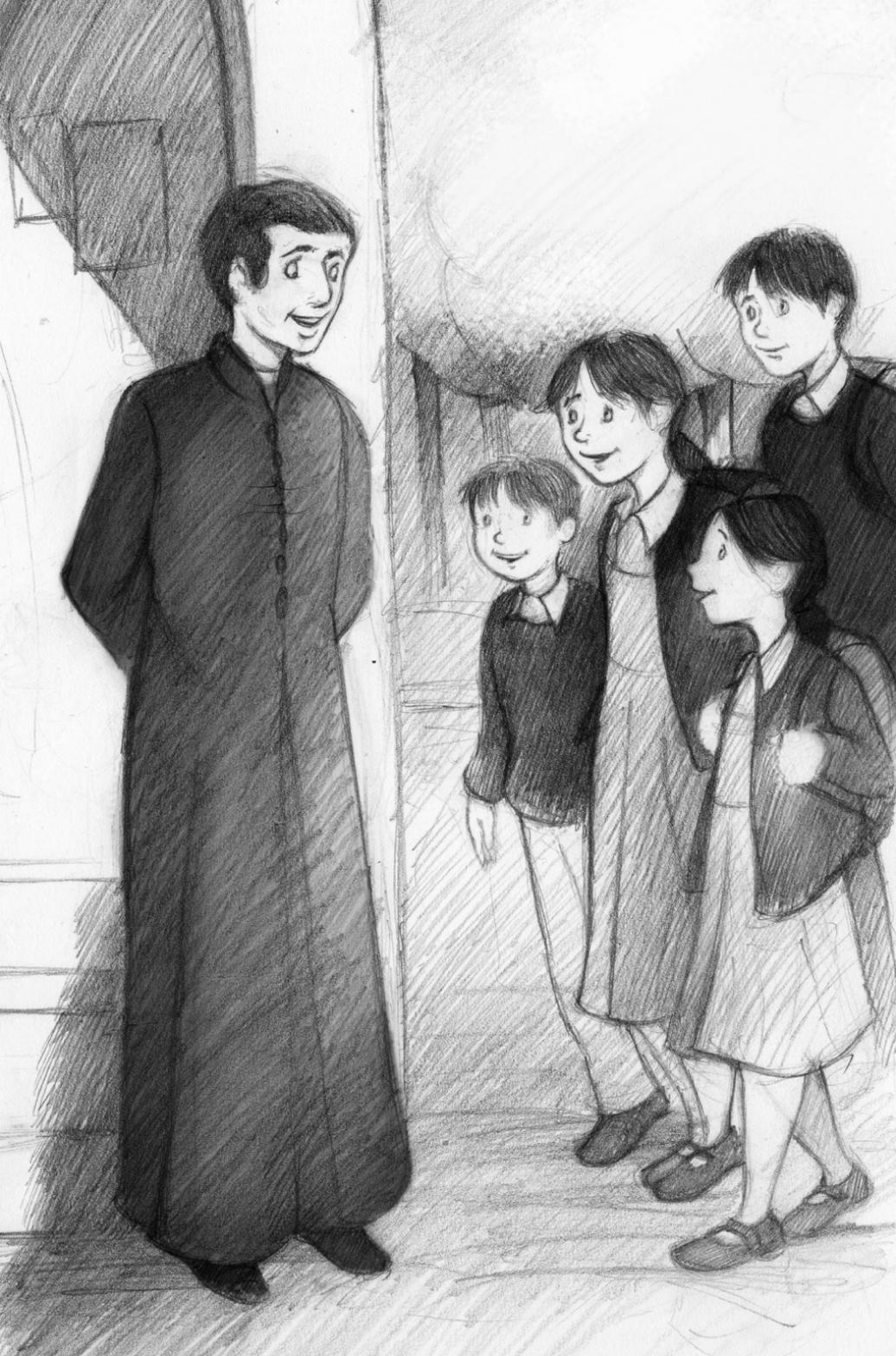
the poor by living lives of penance and prayer.

There were a lot of adults and kids going into the school. Sam saw her friend Kim Lee in the crowd. Sam had met Kim earlier in the summer at Mass. Kim was born in China. She had a round face with light golden skin and narrow eyes that were dark brown. She had short black hair, and sometimes she wore black-framed glasses.

They smiled at each other before another family blocked their view.

Father Cliff was the parish priest. He was a young priest with jet black hair and a face that looked like he could have been a movie star. He stood inside the front doors and waved everyone through. "Go to the big meeting room at the end of the hall," he said over and over to everyone. "Find your teacher. Parents should stand in the back."

The big meeting room was the school



auditorium. It had a stage at one end. Folding chairs were lined up in neat rows. The room was crowded.

Mrs. Perry put a hand on Sam's shoulder. "There's your teacher. Sister Lucy," she said. She guided Sam and Nick in that direction.

Sister Lucy was one of the sisters that taught at the school. She wore what looked like a long white dress. It reached all the way down to her shoes. And on top of that she had a little white cape that covered her shoulders. She had a black covering over her hair. The black covering had a white band that held it in place. Sam saw a silver crucifix around her neck. A large rosary was hanging from her belt. Sam thought Sister Lucy was too young to be a sister. She thought sisters were supposed to be really old.

Sister Lucy smiled at them and said, "Good morning." She pointed to the seats where the third graders would

sit. Sam and Nick sat down.

Mrs. Perry gave them kisses on their cheeks. "Have a good day," she said and moved to the back of the room.

"I don't like this," Nick whispered to Sam. He kept toying with the tie around his neck. It was the same design as Sam's skirt.

"Mom said you only have to wear it the first day of school and for special events," Sam said.

Nick frowned. "I still don't like it," he said.

Brad sat down next to Nick. Brad was Nick's friend. Brad's hair was pasted down with some kind of hair gel to make it look tidy. She had never seen him with tidy hair before. Sam almost giggled.

Kim Lee sat down next to Sam. "Hi," she said.

"Hi," Sam said back to her.

"You look nervous," Kim said.

Sam nodded.

“It will be okay,” Kim said. Kim had been going to St. Clare’s since kindergarten.

Father Cliff got up on the stage and stood behind a microphone on a stand. He tapped the top of the microphone. It made a loud bumping noise. Everyone was quiet.

“Take your seats,” Father Cliff said. He waited a moment. Then he said, “I am Father Cliff Montgomery, the pastor of St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church. Welcome to our school.”

A few people applauded.

“Our day will always begin with an assembly of all the students,” he said. “And our assembly will always begin with prayer.” He bowed his head and made the Sign of the Cross.

Sam bowed her head and closed her eyes. She made the Sign of the Cross.

The new school year was really starting.

She wondered what kind of year they would have.