

## The Miracle Staircase of Santa Fe, New Mexico

True stories regarding the intercession of St. Joseph abound. One that has become known to the general public is "the miracle staircase".

In 1872 the bishop of Santa Fe, New Mexico commissioned the building of a convent chapel, Our Lady of Light Chapel in the care of the Sisters of Loretto. During the course of its construction the architect died suddenly and only afterwards did the builders discover an error in the plans. There was no staircase to the choir loft. But worse, at that point of construction, any stairwell would take up much needed space and disfigure the design.

The nuns began nine days of prayer in honor of St. Joseph, for he was a carpenter. On the day after their novena ended, a shabbily dressed man appeared at the door. The Sisters showed him their choir loft and the limited space available to erect a staircase. He assured them he would be able to build one, and so they let him undertake the task. With him was a burro carrying the toolbox. He offered to begin at once, if they would allow him total privacy while he worked. They hired him and he locked himself in. For three months he permitted no visitors, then he opened the doors.

When the Mother Superior entered, she stared in amazement, there in the corner was a beautiful freestanding staircase rising in a double spiral to the choir loft that may be seen today by visitors to Santa Fe. Each section is perfectly fitted in a groove--not a nail being used in its construction. There is no central pole, no wall attachment, no sign of a nail or screw--just a few wooden pegs. Moreover, the wood he used was unlike any the Mother had ever seen. Yet the carpenter had brought no wood with him.

Architects from all sections of the country go to inspect this unique and marvelous piece of craftsmanship. When the work was completed and the Mother Superior of the convent wished to pay the man for his service, he was nowhere to be found. No one had seen him come or go. A reward was offered; no one ever claimed it. It is thought that the unknown carpenter was none other than St. Joseph, in whose honor the Sisters had received Communion every Wednesday that he might assist them in building a staircase. There is no doubt that the prayers of those nuns were answered in a most remarkable way.

