

I have so much to say about life immediately after Sandy. I had the privilege of helping many throughout the state, and have so many stories and pictures. But this story is by far, my favorite.

The days after Sandy were spent running to Newark, Hoboken, wherever I knew help was needed. I would see a tweet by a shelter in need of supplies, and my Mom and I would knock on doors, collect donations and goods and go out and deliver them.

Saturday, when we arrived in Little Ferry, we were trying to get to the FEMA Disaster Relief Center with donations and we were told that we had to park blocks away. Our car was full of heavy canned goods and bulky diaper boxes, so this news didn't thrill me. My mom stuck her head out the window and asked a family if we could use their driveway, they were directly across the street from the school turned Relief Center.

We allowed this family to sift through our donations before we got help from FEMA and the National Guard, who delivered our goods. We helped organize the center as much as we could, and we tried to get and deliver answers. As I said, I have a lot of stories about what I've seen in the last week.

But when we returned to our car, the 75 year old woman who lives there grabbed my mother's arm and brought us to her basement. The basement that used to serve as a second kitchen, had been completely underwater. Her hot water heater was destroyed, along with all the food she had tucked away for exactly this occasion. They were not supposed to flood in Little Ferry. They were not in a flood plain, a levee broke.

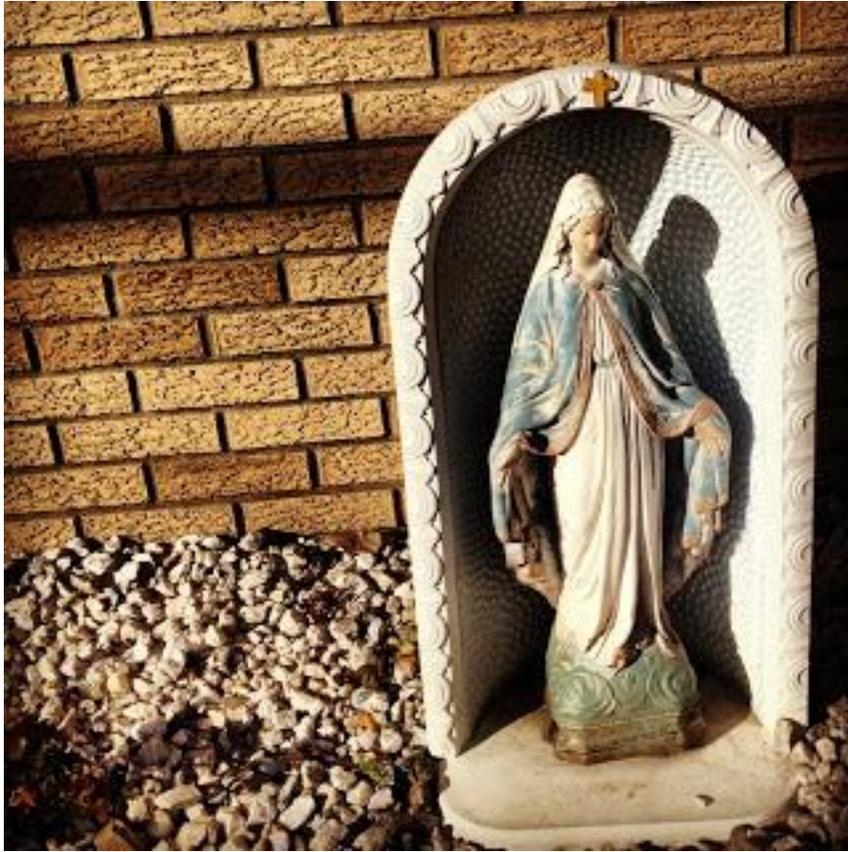
We came upstairs escaping the smell, and we introduced ourselves. I said my name was Mary and the woman said, "Me too." Her Italian accent was thick but she was sharp as a tack, explaining what the flood did to her home and how horrifying it was. Finally, she showed us where her statue of The Blessed Mother once stood. She told us that Mary herself was washed away in the flood, that she felt so lost after losing a statue she had owned for 40 years. She wanted her Blessed Mother, a beer, and a hot shower, and none of these things were attainable for her.

My mother and I came home on a mission. We would go back to Little Ferry the next day with much of what the Relief Center has asked for, along with some specific groceries for families with food allergies. That story is another one. But when we got home we reached out to a Catholic family on my block, and told this same story.

Look what was on our doorstep the next morning.



I ran to my door the next morning feeling like Christmas, so excited to see what was there. I could not wait to deliver this to Mary.



As the fates would have it, she fit perfectly!