

Mercy Story Six – June

She had every reason to be a care-absorber, like her twin sister. But instead she was a care-giver.

Or rather, she became one. It was never fully second-nature to her as it is for some people whose upbringing is very different from hers. She had to work at it, both at home and on the job. But few people detected in her adult life any trace of her insecure and chaotic childhood.

On the other hand, her sister's life as an adult reproduced the insecurities of their childhood. You could never "fill her cup". None of her husbands and partners "met her needs". She doted on her children until they crossed her. Then she wrote them off. She absorbed care like a thirsty sponge.

During their childhood years, their parents were divorced twice and married three times, to each other! Grandma raised both girls, on top of her nine children and alcoholic husband. She did her best, but the girls knew this wasn't really their home. In little ways, they were made to feel like a burden, a charity case. They were definitely second-class members of Grandma's family.

Individually, their dad and mom seemed to love them. But when they tried to live together as a family, their constant bickering and shouting at each other made life a nightmare for the girls. It ended only when Dad was killed in an accident on the highway.

Both girls seemed headed in the same direction. The difference started showing up when they were Confirmation age. The one went to Confirmation preparation classes with her friend. The other skipped out on them, with her friend. Grandma didn't care one way or the other.

Three things grabbed her attention in those classes, and held it:

1) The instructor quoted St. Paul to the effect that "God wants you all to be saints". He went on to assure them that, according to Mary, our Blessed Mother, God gives every person in the world enough graces to become a saint. You just need to make good use of them, not throw them away.

2) When it comes to changing bad attitudes and behaviors into good ones, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount shows us two ways to do it: We can think our way into new ways of acting, and we can act our way into new ways of thinking. The instructor put them through some role plays that showed them how this really works. It was an eye-opener for her that she never forgot.

3) The instructor pointed to the two thieves nailed to crosses beside Jesus. They shared the same terrible history, but they responded to Jesus in opposite ways. One embraced His Mercy, and Jesus opened the door of Paradise to him. The other one rejected His Mercy and died in misery.

Confirmation changed her forever. She was determined to stick with Jesus and to trust in His Mercy and Love **even when she had to act contrary to her feelings**. Gradually the feelings of chaos and insecurity within her began to melt away. The more secure she was in Jesus' love for her, the more her focus shifted away from herself. She woke up to the people around her! Now she was responding to others for their sake, not for her sake. She was becoming a care-giver.