

Someone Special Needs You - Student Essay Contest Winner 2015

By Grace Wilson

Mercy is compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone or something. Acts of Mercy are performed as actions seeking forgiveness or charity and are identified with Christianity and most specifically, the Roman Catholic Church. Common Acts of Mercy include burying the dead, visiting the imprisoned or sick, clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless. There are many Acts of Mercy, but one more personal one inspired me more than any other act.

My sister, Ryan, fed starving orphans in Thailand this past summer. She was there on a medical internship when she was scheduled to visit an orphanage in a poverty-stricken part of the country. Upon arriving, she saw that the orphanage where over 100 children were living was made of bamboo and floating on a lake. She learned that the orphanage and families whose homes float on that lake are too poor to pay land taxes so they live in floating homes. Sadly, the lake is prone to flooding, where people can die in the rising waters.

When Ryan saw the children so severely undernourished, she was deeply disheartened. Yet, even though they were hungry, they were still very glad to see Ryan. She played with the children and saw some of them didn't get to eat that day due to the lack of food supplies.

As she was departing, she felt awful leaving the children with no food to eat. Even though she would be late to get back to work at her internship, Ryan was determined to do something for these children. She went to the nearest market and purchased a 30-pound bag of rice. She drove all the way back to the orphanage with the rice. The children were crying with joy and dancing around her and the bag of rice. Ryan told me that she cried tears of joy for being able to help the children but also tears of sadness for she knew they needed more.

I listened to my sister's experience firsthand and she painted a picture of the village, the orphanage, the children, the poverty and their hunger. I am so proud of her and, after hearing her story, I know that I am capable of doing the same.

This act of mercy has inspired me more than any other because I was able to connect with my sister and her words. I think that when an Act of Mercy is carried out by someone close to you, it affects you greatly. Listening to my sister speak about her experience moved me to take action. This Act of Mercy has inspired me to work at an organization, Someone Special Needs You, where people provide socialization for autistic and handicapped teenagers and adults. We play games, do crafts and eat meals together.

Perhaps it is not as merciful as my sister feeding the hungry, but I believe I am making

a difference. When I spend time with my "buddies" at Someone Special Needs You, they make me look at the world differently. For example, my buddy Daniel asked me if I was happy. I thought: What a powerful question that no one has ever asked me before! He smiled when I responded that I was happy. The truth is, I was happy to be spending time with him. I was touched that he asked how I was feeling and because he was genuinely excited that I was happy. What a special friend I made! I can only hope that I make him smile as much as he makes me smile! I have made it my goal, my Act of Mercy, to spread happiness with my special friends.

Mercy is an act that shows empathy and charity to others. I have heard about many Acts of Mercy, but the one that has encouraged me the most is my sister's act of feeding poor orphans. It has inspired me to volunteer with Someone Special Needs You. Today, I feel like my buddies do more for me than I do for them. Specifically, I feel God's love in Daniel's smile. I feel God in my heart when Daniel and I laugh together. I feel like I have received so much more than I have given at Someone Special Needs You because my heart is full. Perhaps that is the secret to performing Acts of Mercy. Perhaps we grow closer to God because we are able to do for others and our hearts become nourished. Perhaps we who perform Acts of Mercy are the true beneficiaries, not the poor, hungry or naked.