

Blessing is Daring to Love

Written by Tang Yau-yang

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“I’m grateful to her. It was she who led me to Tzu Chi,” says Shen Rong-jun (沈容君), speaking of his wife, Zhong Bao-ying (鍾寶英). She echoes back, “I’m indebted to Rong-jun for his company on the Path of the Bodhisattvas.” They cherish each other and extend their love to others outside the circle of their immediate family.

I was born in Hong Kong, but my parents passed away when I was very young. Although my older brothers and sister could work and support themselves, I spent my life before age 11 in a Catholic orphanage.

Some children in the orphanage still had one parent. When their mom or dad visited them on weekends, they received food or gifts. Although occasionally one of my brothers visited me on holidays, I rarely received anything. He was poor and could only afford to bring me paper and envelopes for letters. Whenever I wrote, I always told him that I was well. I didn’t want him to worry about me. I once told him that I wanted some coloring pens, and he brought them to me! Bless him. I was overjoyed.

The orphanage had 10 bedrooms, each occupied by 10 to 14 children. Each room had a room mother. My mother died of asthma, which also afflicted me. I was often very sick. My room mother had to take me to the hospital when my asthma flared up. She missed many nights of sleep because of me.

My room mother often rapped me on my head, perhaps because of all the trouble I caused her. One day, on the way back home from a hospital visit, she told me to take my medicine. I swallowed it, but began coughing because I didn’t have any water to wash it down my throat. She banged me on my head; I squatted down and cried.

Life was hard at the orphanage. Even those with one parent couldn’t get love most of the time. I longed for better days to come, and I hoped that one day when I had the ability, I could love and help others.

I was most fortunate. I married a wonderful man who has given me love and a warm family. We immigrated to New Zealand in 1997.

One day in 2005, out of the blue, I lost my hearing in my left ear. A trip to the doctor revealed that a three-centimeter tumor had encroached on the auditory nerves. The doctors promised to do their best to save my life, but they also warned me of the possibility of a stroke during surgery. Such an event might commit me to a wheelchair for the rest of my life.

I was in great agony, knowing that my life could end in a heartbeat. The worst part was probably the two months leading up to the operation. Pressure from waiting and the anxiety over my uncertain future hung over everyone in my family. My husband, whose mother also died when he was young, and I didn’t want our son to follow in our unfortunate footsteps by losing his mother as a child.

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