

GROWING UP CATHOLIC: CHARACTER AND FAITH

A Story

I want to begin by telling you a story. It's a true story in some ways, but we'll talk about that later.

The story is about two young people, a boy and a girl, about your age, whose names are Evie and Adam. They grew up in an orphanage someplace in eastern Europe. It was a good orphanage. The children who lived there were well taken care of. They had nice clean beds, plenty to eat, and a big yard to play in. The people who ran the orphanage were strict but kind, and the children loved them. They went to the school with the other children from the village. It was a good school; they learned a lot, and they had many friends there.

So you can see, Evie and Adam were good kids. They had a good life. Only one thing was missing. They didn't know who they were or where they came from. They had been told by the orphanage director that they were brought there when they were very small – old enough to walk, but not yet able to talk.

According to the director's story, there had been a huge landslide in a neighboring country. Mud had rushed down the side of the mountain and buried whole villages. Several days after the landslide, a rescue worker had found the two children, alone and hungry, wandering in the mud. He took care of them for a few days, hoping someone would come looking for them. When no one came, he took them back to his own village and brought them to the orphanage there. They had been there ever since.

One day the orphanage director called Evie and Adam to his office. There was a visitor there to see them. He was a handsome young man whose name was Jessie, and he had an amazing story to tell them. Several years ago, when Jessie was 13 years old, his mother had taken the two youngest children in their family and had flown to eastern Europe to visit an elderly aunt. She arrived at her aunt's house just before a giant landslide buried the whole village in mud. Jessie said that it had taken many days for word of the disaster to reach his father, and many more days for the father to get a plane to the country and transportation to the devastated area. By the time he got to the village, the search and rescue operation was over. He had asked everyone he met if they knew anything about his wife and children, but no one had seen them. His father had gone home heartbroken, convinced that he had lost them forever.

Then, just a few months ago, Jessie said, his father had met a salesman who knew about a little orphanage in eastern Europe, and about two children from the mud slide who were living there. His father had contacted the orphanage immediately. The orphanage director was very cautious at first, and did a thorough investigation of the man and his family. He didn't want to tell the two young people until he knew for sure their family had been found. He had even had a DNA sampling done to be sure that Evie and Adam truly belonged to the father.

And now Jessie had come to the orphanage to tell Evie and Adam who they were. They were not orphans, but children of a father who loved them very much. They had a home and a family in a land far away. Jessie was their big brother who had been sent to tell

them this wonderful story. They also had several other brothers and sisters, all of whom loved them, and were waiting for them to come home.

1. If you were the children in the story, how would you feel when you heard this news?
2. How would you feel about meeting Jessie? Would you trust him? Believe him? Would you believe what he tells you about his father?
3. Evie and Adam are good kids, with a good life. What difference will it make to them to know who they are?
4. At the end of the story, the children know about their father, but they don't know him. What will it take for the children to really get to know him?
5. How will knowing Jessie help the children get to know the father?
6. What new responsibilities will go with their new identity? Do they have a choice about reconnecting with their family? Could they just stay in the orphanage?
7. My story is a parable. I made it up to teach you the lesson I want you to learn tonight. Take a few minutes to talk to the person near you about what the story might mean. (Repeat the questions above, applying them to the meaning of the story.)
8. This program is called Growing Up Catholic: Character and Faith. I wanted the story to help us to understand the connection between CHARACTER and FAITH and to see how important it is that we develop both of them.

Character has to do with being good. To be persons of character we have to

- Know what is good
- Want to do what is good
- Do what is good

Faith has to do with loving and being loved. To be persons of faith we have to

- Know who we are and whose we are
- Know that we have been created for love by someone who loves us
- Know why we should be good