

Sophie Meinhardt Memorial Scholarship 2015

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OLV

I sat with my mom and dad one evening, and we talked about Sophie's Scholarship. When I read the theme chosen by Pope Francis to celebrate World Youth Day to my parents, my mom smiled. And I knew right away - because of my sister Mollie. Mollie was my older sister who had cerebral palsy and died at the age of 10. Her life was very difficult because she could not physically do much. But as hard as it was, she was a happy, perfect, "pure of heart child."

I had many memories of Mollie, but it was my mom and dad who told me how I helped to make Mollie's life very happy. Even though my parents took great care of her, I knew they needed help. I learned very early that Mollie's care was very important, and I could help be a part of her care. I also learned that I loved making her laugh, and she had a great laugh!

Mollie was not able to see well, but she loved to listen to sounds, any kind of sound like music, singing, laughing, and silly sounds (especially the kind my little brothers made). She also loved to touch and be touched. So every morning I would run to her bed, jump in and snuggle. I would hug her, and she would try to hug back. I would read stories to her and show her colorful pictures. And when mom or dad was getting her ready for the day, I would sing to her so she wouldn't cry when they were doing her medical treatments. I got to sit on her tray of her wheelchair, and she would try with all her might to hold on to me when her school bus would come to pick her up. She was so proud to be "holding me", she would squeal to Nancy the bus driver.

My mom told me that I made a difference, and I thought about that. I know I did not change the world, but I was able to make the world of those I loved a little brighter. I don't know if what I did with my family was selfless, because I loved every minute of it.

Mollie was such a gift to me. I use what I learned from her in my daily life today. When I see someone struggling, I do what I can to help and to make them feel better - even if that is to smile, encourage them, or just say a prayer for them. I know those are simple things, but you never know what struggles people have in their lives. My parents ask me almost every day to remember to always leave a person happier when I leave a room than when I entered.