

...She was an ordinary South Omaha girl, or was she?



The Gospel today is about the traveling disciples being accepted and receiving hospitality.

"Whatever place does not welcome you, or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet..."

The following true story is about acceptance.

Accepting the vicissitudes of life, and forming a home where no one is excluded.

+ Patricia (Cassidy) Andahl

She was a South Omaha girl. "Just an ordinary South Omaha girl." SHE would say of herself.

Here's is a story of acceptance, of accepting the vicissitudes of life, and forming a home of acceptance and refuge.

She grew up near the Stock Yards during very difficult years, in the midst of the Great Depression.

Her family was poor. And her life journey from the beginning was an uphill slog. Never a run. Never a sprint. Never a jaunt. And never easy.

But from the beginning until the end, she had what the athletes describe as "heart." Or others would call "true grit." From the very first day when she had to walk slowly to school, she would sometimes have to suffer cruel remarks from other children s because she had to drag her

club foot.

Finally, at age 13 when other girls began to dream of dancing at the prom, her bad leg was amputated below the knee.

I read an article recently by Edward Burns in *Today's American Catholic* in which he wrote: "It is important for us to cherish and respect our ordinary lives and the ordinary humanity of others. ...Another writer described our human condition as 'this arduous thing called life.'

Living a life that is arduous, difficult, demanding of us can wear us down, make us tired, make us resentful, make us want more than our ordinary lives can seem to offer, as we live them."

But Patricia never slowed down, or wore down, nor became resentful. She just kept going as though that was the ordinary thing to do. And she was just an ordinary person.

Or was she?

Because her one leg made her "different" as a child, and then as a teen, and not accepted by some, her son Tom, one of her six children, would write:

"I suspect the latter is what helped her to form an open heart.

She was a remarkably tolerant and inclusive person who accepted everyone into the family, whether by birth, marriage, or friendship, without question and with complete love, even though we are all quite diverse."

And then this South Omaha girl married, her dear husband, Bob had to serve two years in overseas assignments in the Air Force, taking him to the ends of the earth, to Greenland and Saudi Arabia, leaving her to take on the role of a single mom.

During his Greenland year, she was at home caring for a one year old, a three year old, a five year old, and a seven year old. "I have no idea how she managed!" wrote her son Tom.

So we remember in prayer this "Ordinary South Omaha girl/"

Or was she?

No. Rather I think:

"This extraordinary South Omaha Woman!"