

Molly:

Habits are who we are and we get to choose every day who that is. What's remarkable about these women is that their habits are changing the world. Hi, and welcome to habits, the good, the bad, and the Holy. I'm Molly and I'm sitting down every week with the Adorers of the blood of Christ, religious sisters, to hear their stories and learn how habits have become more than a symbol for their vocation. They become the means to which they change lives. Hi everyone. Welcome back today. I'm here with Sister, Mary Schoenecker sister Mary. Thank you so much for coming and joining us.

Mary:

You're welcome. I'm happy to be here. I'm excited to talk with you.

New Speaker:

Your longest ministry with the Adorers. Was your time in Korea? Yes. Yes. Uh, what did you do in Korea?

Mary:

Oh, I did a variety of things at first. Uh, I didn't really know the language and that, so I had to study language. I went for the, the language school that I attended. Uh, we went, we'd go for six weeks and intensive study and full time. Uh, then I'd almost study. Uh, and then, uh, after, after six of those, then you were finished with language school and ready to begin the language in life. So six, six week increments. So 36 weeks, total, almost a full year of, of immersive Korean.

New Speaker:

Uh, did you find the language difficult to learn?

Mary:

Well, it was, but I've always had a yen for languages and wanted to have some on my, uh, college certificate over here. And they said going to summer school, doesn't leave you much time to learn a language so we don't offer it in summer. So I waited until Korea anyway, to see you went to Korea. So when did you go to Korea? What year? In 1978. In October of 78. In 78. And what did you do while you were there? Uh, all right. A variety of things at first, besides learning the language, uh, there was a lot of need for people to, uh, learn English, especially people who were, uh, college students who were going into a business because Korea is a small country and depended so much on international trade. They needed English conversation and learned basic English in grammar school already, but no idea how to put it together. And so I did a number of those many of those. Okay. And what else did I do? I helped around the house with, with, uh, uh, the new people would, who would come in as, uh, candidates for the community. So you helped, uh, women who were

Molly:

Considering becoming a sister to you, worked with them. Um, so you were a teacher and a vocation director and you continued your vocations work for many years. What did you do? Vocations in Korea and in the United States or just in Korea?

Mary:

Let me see. I did some work with that in the United States, um, uh, postulants, uh, for, uh, a couple of years and not too much further than that because I would switch to other, other, uh, work

Molly:

Other works. What other ministries have you had?

Mary:

I knew I should have put this together a little that's all right. Uh, some of the work I did also was, uh, people who wanted to have small groups, student speaking, they Sheehan people who had studied some English, maybe women and men who, who, uh, had studied English a lot in order to be able to use it, but, but, uh, who lacked the conversational skills. So we would meet. And sometimes I had very interesting, uh, people and those courses. Um, then as I went, uh, it became very useful to me to have those people, those contacts, those contacts. Yes. Um, at one time I was having a group of ladies. They were all Christians, not all Catholics, but anyway, we would meet several times a week and have conversations and they wanted Bible study. So we would take, uh, usually a story from the gospels and say, okay, what, what was Jesus meaning?

Mary:

What's the significance of his words? And they would try to figure that out. And I would say, in my words, Jesus was telling them and they would, they would respond. Then they began to talk freely about their, their likes and dislikes with the way things were handled at their church. Well, I didn't want to enter into that exactly. But, but there were informing me, one lady said our pastor is always talking about tithing and the need to give money for the church. And do you think that's what Jesus would have done? I said, imagine it, what would Jesus be seeing and RS. So they would do things like that. And we would go into, uh, what the meaning of the gospel, what Jesus intentions might've been. All right. So, uh, this became more and more heavy on her mind. Well, at the same time, uh, as this was going on, I was also, I was also working with foreign migrant workers, those workers that I worked with, uh, in Korea to earn some money for themselves and often not getting fair treatment.

Mary:

And so I was doing advocacy work with them at the same time. And then sometimes I would tell the Bible study group that these people were having this struggle and tell about how I was trying to help. For instance, when winter would draw near, we would have, I would take big bags of, uh, uh, sweaters and coats and that, because they weren't prepared at all for winter and not only I, but a group working with me all right. And we would take those on Sunday afternoons down to where the people needed them. Well, one evening the doorbell rang and, uh, it was one of the ladies from our Bible study and she said, uh, I don't want to come in. So I went out to the gate and we spoke and she said, my husband and I have decided to give you our money that we would have given to the church this this time we want to give it to you. And they were quite wealthy. So I came back in the house and said to these people, Oh, what do I do? They want me to use it for the work with those foreign workers and all they said, use it for that. That's the purpose of it? I mean, I wanted agreement, but they gave it right.

Molly:

So you, you asked them, but you really knew what you want to know.

Mary:

I wonder what they might say, but we had to get this squared off. All right. So I had this huge amount of money, which I had never had before. Couple days later, I received a call from one of the ladies that was working with me, with the workers down at the church. And she, herself was Filipino. And there was, uh,

a Filipino woman who was pregnant. And was she really, I don't know how to say it in proper medical terms, but she had a bad, uh, anyway, her pregnancy was endangering her life, but the hospital would not take her because she didn't have money to pay. Oh my goodness. And I said, ah, I said, how much are they demanding? And she told me, I said, what's up way. Do I take to get there? And where do I get off? All right. So we met, I took the subway, immediately took some of this money. I just received and gave her that amount. Plus enough amount. The lady could go back to the Philippines, you know, give her some extra. And fortunately the lady lived. And when she, when, when the person who had requested it came to church, the next Sunday, she said, Oh, we thought you, this lady wouldn't be living anymore. Well, all right. That was goodness. As God provided granted to all sorts of things like that, along the way. Yeah.

Molly:

So really do you believe that that money came to you? Because God,

Mary:

I knew that that woman would need it. That could very well be I, God knows it all. So I have no doubt that God knew it

Molly:

And that you were, I think he knew you'd be a good steward of it.

Mary:

Probably, probably because I would be very sparing of it until I needed it.

Molly:

So you spent how many years in Korea? 21, 21 years in Korea. So you fully, you know, blended into their culture, you became a part of their community, um, so much so that your family adopted Korean children.

Mary:

Oh yes. All right. I have, uh, uh, one Nisa in Colorado. Uh, she and her husband have three Korean children. Can you talk about what that means to you? What it meant a lot, because they trusted that I would help them. They got to the point where they officially adopted a little Korean boy, but at the time they could take him home. He was four or five months old and, and, okay. So they came to Korea. They wanted that a period of time. So I took them around all the places I knew in Korea that they would like to meet them.

Molly:

So you really got to be a part of that adoption story. And they, you said they've adopted two more children in three months. So how old are the kids now?

Mary:

The first one is graduated from high school. Now the other two are there about fifth and sixth grade. I think I would say it's

Molly:

Incredibly, um, telling that your family obviously shared your passion and love for the Koreans that you spent time with, that they adopted them into their family. Did your niece and nephew talk to you about it before they started? Was, you know, did they say that there was a reason why they chose Korea to adopt?

Mary:

Oh, and they knew that I would know that too. Yeah. Yeah.

Molly:

So you came back, uh, to the United States 20 years after you started in Korea. What year did you come back to that?

Mary:

It came back, uh, in the year. 2000.

Molly:

And what did you do when you came back? It must've been hard. You had spent a huge chunk of your life.

Mary:

I would go to my room sometimes and cry. I was just really sad, but what did to get it? See when, when the leadership, uh, came over on a visit on one of the visits, the provincial at the time, talk to me and said, you know how long you can't stay in Korea forever, but how long are you planning to stay Anessa? Oh, why do you ask? She said, because we find that some people, if they stay too long until they're really elderly, that's all they can think about and they want to go back it's their home. And so it would probably be to your advantage if you'd come sooner. Well thinking, I just said, well, I could say that I could be ready in a couple of years. She said, are you sure? I said right now, I feel sure when she came home and told his sisters I'd be home in two years, what can I do?

Molly:

Yeah. What could you do? The die had been cast.

Mary:

It sounded like a real promise. All right. So I did come home at first. I worked with sister Diana Rawlings and, and, uh, uh, other people who were in the vocation office. All right. So I did that work with them. So what

Molly:

Did you do for vocations

Mary:

For vocation there? Uh, naturally they all had their people that they wrote to and all that. They gave me those in junior high, seventh and eighth graders. And they didn't know enough about their vocation yet

to, to really have a serious go with them. I really tried hard, but at the same time, I knew I didn't want to stay there.

Molly:

So that was not the best fit for you,

Mary:

Not the best fit. So, uh, ongoing, I also found other opportunities. All right. The one I like best was I went into, I, I did volunteering for Harry Hines Memorial hospice, the one father Thomas helped to found, and I did 10 years of volunteer service with mass. So you worked in pastoral care, uh, yeah. Going to sit with dying patients, going to visit certain patients. They always gave me people and, you know, I wasn't the world's best, uh, map follower. So I really had to work. I know we're only where all these people lived, I'd go to their homes or a care home, wherever they were and be with them.

Molly:

So I, I know a lot of people, um, they think of dying as this really scary process. And, um, the idea of going and performing pastoral care or sitting with dying people can be very overwhelming, very uncomfortable. What can you say as

Mary:

Someone who spent many years with people who are dying, what can you say about that process and the joy it brought to your life? I would just say I didn't find it. So because if, if they were Christian, I could take that approach if they were not, uh, I'd say, well, how much are you able to do? If you don't die now, what can you still do with your life? What continues to bring you joy? What continues to bring you some life and happiness? And they were telling me a very few things do, because when I start doing this I'm incapacitated and then sometimes they could talk some of that through and begin to ease on their fears. So in a way, you know, sitting with those men and women was healing for them, yes, I would say so. And I think that's awesome. The purpose of hospice is to let them die in peace and give them satisfaction and joy for as long as you can do that.

Mary:

Right. So there's one question. We ask everyone that comes on the podcast and it is about habits, which is the namesake of the podcast. Um, what would you say is your best habit? That's a hard question. Uh, I don't know, trying to keep a schedule of prayer that is just natural to me. I go to it for the, for the gospel readings and all of the day and take meditation time with that, and then go to the work out of that. And what's your worst habit? My worst habit, if I'm reading and then fall asleep in the middle of it, Mary, thank you so much for coming and sitting down with us. I've really enjoyed hearing about your experience in Korea. Thank you so much. And for whatever it's lacking, I'm I apologize. Oh, it's not lacking anything. Thank you so much for coming and telling your stories. All right. Very good. You're most welcome.

Molly:

Thanks for joining us for show notes. And behind the scenes, check out our website, adores.org habits is brought to you by the doors of the blood of Christ us region. Co- Produced by Cheryl Wittenauer, Lori Bengé and Molly McKinstry edited by Molly. Mckinstry. Thanks. We'll see you all next week.

