



I like to think one of the things held in common between Dorothy, Greta, Marge, George, Marion, Rich and Pastor Stuenkel, is that they all had their own way of convincing others that they were saints, too. I don't know that any of these seven precious children of God would ever go out of their way to call themselves saints, necessarily, but they would, instead, lift others up: to convince their family, friends, co-workers, their Covenant sisters and brothers. Even on those days filled with intense physical pain, they would lift up hospital and nursing home staff; as if to convince all of us of the good we had to offer in our own lives, as if God had already started in claiming us as saints for the sake of a world in need.

In these seven absolutely wonderful disciples of Christ, our Covenant family has lost a most tremendous collection of siblings in Christ who forever left their mark on us as a church. And yet, to the rest of the world and the wider universal church, their names may not be known nearly as much, and I'm not sure they would really mind that. They are part of a vast array of saints who have died this past year, who may not be quite as famous as others, but are still so incredibly dear to so many; and yes, a part of what made them special is that they would notice the work of others that may not be recognized by the rest.

And so I like to think one saint the seven of them would have all truly treasured in their own way was another woman who died this past May. Her name was Anna, but she was born with a stutter, "getting hung up on 85% of the words she tried to speak, which was [considered] a severe handicap." For most of us, talking on the phone may not be a huge ordeal or giving directions or asking questions for help in a store. And yet, for other just as precious children of God, such social interactions, we easily take for granted, can be rather difficult. Anna called the telephone "an instrument of the devil," so she always needed neighbors close by. She wrote out beforehand, detailed directions to cab and bus drivers, and descriptive lists for clerks at the store.

Nevertheless, she more than thrived in other areas of her life, especially with music. She played the trombone, piano, even excelled at the pipe organ to the point of getting a scholarship from The Julliard School of Music in New York City. Except, World War II began, and her high school sweetheart proposed before his service as a combat pilot ensued. She had to decline that scholarship offer, being that kind of person of lifting others up instead of herself. The couple eventually had two children together, all the while her husband continued to serve in the Korean War, and even well beyond that.

Unfortunately, Anna's stuttering continued to cause issues for her personally, being ridiculed and bullied along the way. She tried so many different treatments, but it wasn't until she reached her 50's, when she heard about this communications research institute in Virginia. For three weeks, she took eleven hours' worth of classes every day before the crowning achievement of calling her husband at home and letting him know she was finally able to go to the store and ask for certain items, herself.

Now, as great as that is, as saintly as that might be, to face obstacles in this life and, with God's grace, strive to overcome them not just for your own personal triumph, but for the benefit of your whole family; the ultimate part of the calling of our lives as saints of God is to use our experience for the benefit of others. Anna most certainly did that in developing scholarships for those differently-abled individuals, and becoming a professor and a personal inspiration to many who never thought they had any hope of being valued in this world, of even considering that they, too, had something to offer for the benefit of complete strangers; that they were just as much saints in the eyes of God as anyone else.

Many people throughout this country, especially in this state of Ohio, knew about her husband, who became the first American to orbit the earth, and went on to serve as our state Senator for many years. Many knew about John Glenn, but not nearly as many knew about Annie, who did her best to hide from the media for decades. But, even with her differing abilities, she still raised up her husband to heroic

heights, not to mention her two children, and plenty more lives who we will never know about: precious children of God who needed a different kind of saint to convince them that they, too, were blessed, that they could be adored in spite of any physical or mental differences, that they are also called to be saints, and keep on lifting one another up with the same love that took on sin and death and won the victory for us all across the universal board. And, of course, what made Annie Glenn a saint was not her overcoming a stutter, or marrying a future astronaut, or however many scholarships she instituted; she was already a saint from the very beginning, the same beginning when God became a part of her life, and promised to never ever leave her or any of us, no matter what. And for that Greatest News for all the saints, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!

*Source: John Glenn College of Public Affairs, "Annie Glenn." The Ohio State University.
<http://glenn.osu.edu/about/annie-glenn/>*