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Editor's Note: Birthmother's name has been changed to protect privacy

A FAMILY TRADITION: THREE GENERATIONS OF ADOPTEES JOINED BY CATHOLIC CHARITIES ADOPTION PROGRAM

OKLAHOMA CITY (NOV. 24, 2009) -- In 1912, the groundwork for Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Oklahoma City was laid with the founding of St. Joseph's Orphanage. In 1927, Catholic Charities expanded its services to include adoption, foster care and pregnancy counseling.

Over the years, Catholic Charities has helped place hundreds of children with adopted parents throughout Oklahoma. However, one of their most memorable adoptions involves three generations of adoptees, all of whom found loving homes through the services of Catholic Charities.

The connection began with Roger and Amy, who were unable to have children of their own and looked to adoption to help create their family. They discussed all the options and decided they didn't want to travel around the world going through a long, drawn out adoption or put in applications at multiple places, forcing the issue. Since Amy was adopted through Catholic Charities, the couple chose to use their adoption service.

They initiated the process of adoption through Catholic Charities, but before they could complete all of the paperwork, they experienced uncertainties about their decision and asked to be placed in the inactive file.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town, a young girl named Jessica discovered she was pregnant just two months before she was scheduled to start college.

"I was scared and nervous and didn't know what to do. I didn't know if I wanted to stay with the birthfather or not. It was a really difficult time," recalls Jessica.

Jessica came to Catholic Charities with her mother to discuss her options.

"I was adopted through Catholic Charities and had a good experience with it, so I came to see

what my choices were. Catholic Charities is a great agency for women who are confused or find themselves in an unexpected pregnancy. They won't try to push adoption on you; they tell you all of the options. It is a great agency for women in need," said Jessica.

Despite the ease in dealing with Catholic Charities, other obstacles arose for Jessica. The birthfather and his family opposed adoption from the beginning. Additionally, because the father's family was of Native American descent, the rules for adoption were mandated by the much stricter guidelines of the Indian Child Welfare Act, which specifies that the child's tribe and family will have an opportunity to be involved in any decisions affecting services for the Indian child.

In order for Jessica to place her child for adoption, one or both of the adoptive parents had to be of Native American descent. Together with Sabra Ruminar – Adoption Coordinator of Catholic Charities, she went through all of the prospective parent files searching for a good match. Two sets of adoption applicants met the requirements: Roger and Amy and another couple.

"When I saw Roger and Amy's picture in the book, I was a little concerned about their age, because they were a bit older than what I had in mind. Plus, the other family had another child, and because I was an only child, I wanted my child to have a sibling. However, when I found out I was having twins; I knew that I wanted to bless Roger and Amy with the babies. I liked their religious background, I knew they were financially secure and could give the kids a good life. I also connected with Amy because she, like me, was adopted through Catholic Charities," said Jessica.

Sabra contacted Roger and Amy with the news that the birthmother had chosen them. She explained the situation, telling them it was twins who needed to go to a family with Indian blood. Amy and Roger met with Jessica to formalize adoption plans.

"From the moment she found out she was pregnant, she did everything she could to take care of the babies and keep them as healthy as possible," said Amy. "She even let us record our voices and would hold the recorder to her belly so the babies could hear our voices."

When Jessica went into labor, Amy and Roger were at the hospital to support her and the newborns as they made their way into the world. When the babies were five weeks old, they were able to bring the twins, a boy and a girl, home with them.

Unfortunately, the adoption did not proceed at the expected pace. With the birthfather and his family fighting for custody and the strict considerations of the Indian Child Welfare Act, Amy, Roger, and Jessica spent the next four years in court fighting for the right of Amy and Roger to adopt the twins.

For Jessica, who had already gone through the heart-wrenching process of giving up her children for adoption, it was especially hard to remain vigilant that the babies go to a good home. "It was

really stressful, a lot of emotional ups and downs. There were times I was really depressed, I just had to take it one day at a time,” she remembers.

On March 10, 2008, the adoption was finally complete. Today, the children are 5-years-old and enrolled in kindergarten. They are fully aware of the circumstances surrounding their birth.

“We’ve been very open with them about adoption. We tell them, ‘God chose you, and God chose us to be your mommy and daddy.’ We’re ready to answer any questions they have, openly and honestly. To tell them what a gift it is to be adopted,” said Amy.

Of all the parties involved and the many obstacles they had to overcome to get to happiness, Sabra states, “The people I’ve met through my years at Catholic Charities have so enriched my life. In most jobs, you don’t get to see people regularly putting others before themselves, but in this job you see their selflessness daily, especially with my birthmothers. Jessica could have changed her mind at any point during those four years. It showed great strength and character that she fought for the rights of those babies to the end.”

Following the adoption, Jessica has since gone on to complete her degree and is pursuing a master’s degree in psychology. She also works full time for a Youth and Family Services organization helping at-risk teens.

“I felt that with my experience, going through pregnancy and adoption at a young age, I could be helpful to others in similar situations,” said Jessica of her decision to work with troubled youth.

When asked if she would like children some day, Jessica replied, “I definitely want to have more kids and a family of my own. In the beginning, I didn’t want to tell anybody that I’d had kids before. But I chose to place them for adoption because I was too young and wanted them to have the best life possible with a mother and father and stability. Now I am very open with people about my experience.”

A licensed child-placing agency, Catholic Charities serves the western 2/3 of Oklahoma. Catholic Charities provides adoption services regardless of ethnicity or religious preference. For more information about Catholic Charities OKC Adoption Services, please visit www.catholiccharitiesok.org or contact a Family Support Services staff member at 405-523-3012 (in the Oklahoma City area) or toll free at 1-800-375-3030.

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