

A Door Always Open

"... you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." Luke 15: 31.

For as long as I can remember I have loved the story of the Prodigal Son. Depending on the year or the time in my life I could place myself in the position of either one of the sons. I could lament along with the son who remained with the Father and ask 'how come?' when good things seem to happen to bad people. Or I could be one of the 'bad people' begging forgiveness when realizing all my actions had dishonored God along with myself and just wanting to be forgiven and allowed to come home again.

I never saw myself in the role of the father in the story until I became a mother. The story was meant to reflect God's love for all His Children. I began understanding God's love more when I became a mother than I ever experienced before I had children. I understand God's frustration, God's anger and hurt as He watches His children do things that will violate their gift of life and I also understand God's dreams that He holds for all His children. I have written in the past about such matters. Especially when it comes to war and how people actually believe God wants to pit His children against each other. What mother would be so easily persuaded to have one of her children kill another one of her children? She would want peace, understanding and justice and certainly not violence that would destroy the lives she brought to this world. Moms who truly love their children want their children to love each other. Isn't that what God wants of all His children?

I have a son who has pulled away from the family. The reasons and rationale I cannot understand and it hurts. I have six children and I love all of them in ways they probably don't understand. But the reality is that I love them all. This past Christmas this son stopped by on Christmas Eve and my heart was over-flowed with joy. It had been a long time since I had seen or heard from him. My heart was full of joy before he walked in the door but seeing him, having him home stirred my joy to beyond the boundaries of my heart. Pictures were taken with all of us together. Then he left and I have yet to see or hear from him again.

My excitement to see my son I'm sure was noticed by the other children; the children who have always been with me, remaining at my side through visits and phone calls. They know of my thoughts when I mention his name. They know my door is always open for him to return. Did they wonder why I didn't yell at my son for being gone? Did they think I love him more than them because I was more excited to see him walk in the door than when I saw them walk through the door? Do they wonder why I still look for him to walk through the door when I have them walk through the door all the time?

This morning as I thought about it I realize that when I have all my children with me I'm complete. Is that what the father of the prodigal son was trying to convey to the son who always was with him - that his heart is full with his love of the son he has with him every

day but there is always an empty space that is left with a yearning for the son who isn't around. It becomes filled and complete when both sons come together to be with their father as one.

God didn't need to create any of us to be complete. God created all of us because He wanted us and in so doing I think He opened himself up to feel less complete. Perhaps this is not a theological concept accepted by the Church or any religious leader but I'm not a theologian or a religious leader. I'm a mother who has a little insight into what it must feel like for God to watch His children walk away and wish so hard that they would return back to Him; a God who wants only goodness and love to prevail and yet still love all His children no matter what they choose to do. The door remains open – always.

Dear God the Father, I understand.

By Susan Handle Terbay