

Advent, Day 13
Read Galatians 3:26-4:7

Friday, December 14

"...for you are all one in Christ Jesus..." Galatians 3:28

CHILDREN

My friends, Jim and Sue, have been through the process five times. First it was a brother and sister from Viet Nam. Their mother gave them up rather than risk raising them in the post-war atmosphere there. Next were three Puerto Rican siblings from New York City. A little Korean girl was next. Her father was an African American soldier stationed there who refused to take any responsibility for her. Her mother died shortly after childbirth. Then there was a young boy from the ghetto in Watts, father unknown, mother a heroine addict. Then another girl with Korean-American heritage who had been left by a river to die.

Five times they have heard the judge declare that these who had been strangers were now legally and forever, sons and daughters of Jim and Sue, and brothers and sisters in their new, eclectic family.

It hasn't been easy for any of them. They've had to adapt in so many ways. Each new child brought with them a whole set of baggage. Each had to find a way to fit in, and the others who were already there, had to find a way to accept them and make them feel wanted.

I've never been in a household where I felt more love. I've never been in a household that made it more clear what it means to know ourselves as the adoptive children, sons and daughters of a God who never turns anyone away.

Even though they went through it over and over, with each new one they could never be sure what to expect. All the preparation they could do would never be enough to meet every contingency or to answer every problem. All they could do was hope and pray that they would be able to adapt and to remain alert to whatever needed to be done.

Yet, even with all that uncertainty, they kept on doing it.

Just like God does with us.

We bring with us all the baggage of our past - all the hurts and struggles, all our unrealistic expectations, all our needs and wants. We bring with us our shallow self-centeredness and our self-doubts. We bring with us our uncertainties and our questions. We bring with us our disappointments and disillusionments. We bring with us all our reasons not to trust the love that is offered.

God knows all of that about us. God understands the reasons behind our reluctance. God accepts us with all that we bring and all that we are.

God takes us in strong arms, like a father lifting a child high off the ground and causing that exhilaration and delight. God takes us onto a lap that was meant for holding children, like a mother whose love can make the hurt melt with a kiss and a lullaby. God holds us until we stop our squirming and struggling and we are finally quiet.

And God says, "Welcome home, my child. Welcome home."