

Third Thursday of Advent

December 20th, 2007

“For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the Lord, Your redeemer.” (Isaiah 54:7-8)

I recall visiting my brother’s home once when his son was just a very little boy. During the visit young JT, as he is called, was whining about everything. His mother got so aggravated with him that she shouted at him to be quiet and to go to his room if he was not going to behave. He stomped off and slammed the door. Not too long afterward the crying ceased coming from his room. His mother went in to check on him. I listened at the door to their conversation. My sister-in-law said to him, “JT, you know that we love you but you cannot act that way.” I watched as she put her arm around him and hugged him tight. Shortly afterward, he came back into the living room and all was right in his world again.

Although my sister-in-law might be a bit embarrassed by the comparison, she acted a lot like God in this reading from Isaiah. She lost her temper and then made sure that her son didn’t get the wrong message. She pointed out her concerns but first reinforced the fact that she loved him.

Somehow, that encounter of mother and son has stayed with me as a treasured memory, a crystal clear moment of revelation of a mother’s love for a child and of God’s love for us.

There is so much hope in this reading that it should flood our hearts with joy. First, we have a God who admits that once in awhile He loses His temper. We have a God that explains what He did and why He did it. And finally we have a God that wants to make sure that we understand that His anger was short-lived and that above all else He loves us.

God doesn’t apologize for His conduct because it was justified but He does not want us to fear that His love has been withdrawn forever. If we really believe that, the God of which Isaiah speaks is our God then feel hugged and come back into the living room of the faith.

Reflection Questions

- 1.) How does God guide me when I misbehave?*
- 2.) Do I act on these nudges?*

Prayer: God of all compassion, shine in my heart so that I have no doubt of Your love.