



Third Week of Lent- 3/10- Cara Callbeck

“Growing with God” Meditation 3: God’s Vulnerability

By Cara Callbeck

In Jesus, God saves us by becoming so vulnerable that we can kill him in a vile and humiliating way. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus assure us that God’s offer of friendship will never be withdrawn, no matter what we do. If the cross did not result in a withdrawal of the offer, then nothing we do will lead to a change of God’s heart. We can, however, refuse the offer. Friendship is a mutual relationship, and a person must accept the offer; he or she cannot be coerced or tricked into it. And any human being’s final refusal of God’s friendship breaks God’s heart. Still, God does not turn away from such a person in anger and rage. God lives eternally with a broken heart. That’s how vulnerable God wants to be.

Loving God, I pray for the wisdom to never turn away from your friendship or take advantage of your love for me.

—William A. Barry, SJ, in *Lenten Meditations: Growing in Friendship with God*

As parents, we can relate to God’s vulnerability as described in this meditation. There is a saying that having a child is like putting limbs on your heart and setting it free in the world. We have this intense love for our children—no matter what—that indeed makes us vulnerable.

In my family’s experience, we have had many a talk with our teenaged daughter about the extent of our love for her. Afraid that in these delicate years ahead she might lose her way at some point, make some mistake she thinks is unforgivable, or something awful might happen that tears her away from us, we have tried to make it perfectly clear that we will ALWAYS love her, and that she is welcome home under absolutely any circumstances. We probably give her that speech more often than necessary, but we are doing all we can to drill it deep into her psyche. You are always loved, you are always welcome, and nothing will ever change that. There is a lot that can happen in this world—sometimes by one’s own choices and sometimes by force—and nothing terrifies us more than losing our daughter. Indeed, if she ever turns her back on us, we would be completely heartbroken, but we would not give up on her. Ever.

Imagine that love we have as parents is merely a small reflection of the vulnerable, all-invested love that God has for us all. God’s heart walks this earth by the billions. He carries a perfect love, even greater than that of a parent for a child, for each one of us. For me, that is unfathomable. Jesus tries to give us a sense of it in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but as we know, Jesus used parables to give people a glimpse of understanding into something far greater than they could possibly comprehend. Thus, that parable shows us that the love of the forgiving father is just the beginning.

Now here is the challenge. The all-invested, life-changing love that a parent has for a child is also just the beginning. We are called to be disciples on this earth, to serve others and to treat others as Jesus would.

Does that not mean that the intense love between a parent and child should be the same love we offer every child of God? Father of us all, teach us to love all of your children as we love our own, so that everyone of this earth may glimpse the unfathomable love you have for us. Amen.