

# COME BACK TO ME

No matter how many days I stay when I visit my grandson Sam he tells me it's never long enough. When I tried to explain to him that if we added up all the days I stayed in one year it would add up to more than a month, he told me, "Grandma, that's only 31 days." As far as he's concerned, he can never get enough of time with Grandma.

When he was younger he used to ask who would snuggle him after I left and when I told him that when he snuggled his daddy, he was snuggling part of me, he asked if I could feel it when he hugged his daddy. Many times he's told me that he wished his whole family lived in the same city—sometimes even in the same house. "They could all stay in the spare room and sleep in sleeping bags."

I think there's a bit of a theologian in that boy. His desire for family is just a hint of God's furious longing for each one of us and if we allow it, Lent can be the time when we slow down and let ourselves be caught in the passionate embrace of God.

One of my favorite poems is Francis Thompson's the "Hound of Heaven" in which he describes God's seeking us out much like a bloodhound determinedly pursuing a clue."

Though a very long poem, these lines (with my addendums) sum up the relentless desire of God for us and our often frequent ways of trying to avoid the fire of that love:

*I fled him down the nights and down the days  
I fled Him down the arches of the years  
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind, and in the midst of tears I hid  
from him...*

(or at least thought that I could just sneak away and continue with my own pursuits, ignoring the fact that my very breath depended on God's sustaining love)

*For though I knew His love who followed,  
Yet was I sore adread, lest having Him,  
I should have nought beside.*



(I feared that if I really let God into my life, I'd probably have to let go of the things that gave me joy in life and live a rigorous life as a missionary in a far-away land or do something else dramatic. I figured that it was much safer to keep God at a distance and continue on the path that I had chosen for

myself, never accepting that God loves me and comes to me exactly where I am.)

But one day somewhere in the quiet of my heart, it hit me and would not go away. *I am He whom thou seekest.* And I began to realize what Augustine meant when more than 1500 years ago he said, "Late have I loved you o beauty so ancient yet so new. Late have I loved you and my heart is restless until it rests in you."

I believe that God's heart also is restless until we come home, like the Prodigal and allow the Father to embrace us. One of my favorite Lenten songs is "Come back to Me." An almost plaintive God asks, "Come back to me with all your heart. Don't let fear keep us apart...Long have I waited for your coming home to me and living deeply our new love."

As we ready ourselves to come to our Father's home this Lent and unroll our sleeping bags in the spare room, maybe we can plan to stay long enough to satisfy even my eight-year-old theologian Sam.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate