

PRODIGAL PUP-PUP COMES HOME...A MIRACLE OF EASTER

By Vivienne Nichols, Signal Mountain, TN



Two Easters ago, grandson Grainger, left his beloved Pup-Pup behind at St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Collierville, TN.

Other loveys came along and life rocked on. No doubt Pup-Pup was mourned over and missed, but I don't think we knew how much, until he came back home.

The staff, finding him back then, figured this ragged, worn creature might belong to an "annual" Easter visitor, and kept him for a year, hoping the family might return and reclaim him at Christmas or the next Easter. For some reason, they gave Pup-Pup an undeserved extension—a second year for good measure. I've sensed, in my time there, that people are cared for in much the same way. Second chances and such.

Someone told Ellie, that despite the hopes for a reunion of child and stuffed creature, a decision had been made that, if the lovey wasn't claimed this year, he'd be going to the trash bin on Easter afternoon. In his shelf-time, Pup-Pup had become less a love and more a dusty, old, germ-gathering lump. Who could blame them? Was he useful? Was he sparking joy? Or had he become unclaimed clutter?

I wasn't there, in the room, to know how Pup-Pup was discovered and how the re-connection went down. Only that the clock was ticking, he was near the brink, and....

Here's what I do know—because I saw it.

Grainger appeared, after the Worship Service with his long, lost Prodigal Pup-Pup in hand, and the most peaceful, calm, loving, assured expression on his face. If he could form adult words, I think he'd've spoken of his love and missing to his stuffed pal and he would have spoken words of gratitude for the caregivers. But his face said it all, and enough.

The homily had been powerfully affective. The songs, the sacraments, the sanctuary. Kneeling there with my own beloveds, I'd already received my Easter fulfillment. So, I'd thought.

Yet, more was in store as I witnessed the homecoming joy on Grainger's face and the weary thing flopping around in his hands.

For me, this image holds simple metaphors of Easter.

It speaks of the lost and disenfranchised-separated, apart, on the brink of the bin.

It speaks of those of us—who are ALL of us with imperfect hearts and weak hands—still capable, and charged, with the space-holding, safe-keeping, loving-care of the lost and weary.

It speaks of hope. That God/Love will find a way to us—will work for us—even as we gather germs and dust in places that are foreign to our souls.

It speaks of restoration and redemption—of Home—of the joyful bliss of that reunion—on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

This image of a boy and his lovey goes far with me. That it came on Easter reminds me of the plea and the passion from Good Friday's crosses...

"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

"Today, you, (meaning your sinful, wayward self) will be with me in paradise.

I imagine that reunions, every Heavenly one, before and since, have held within them, sacred joy, unimaginable comfort and the sweet spirit of devoted saints, like the safe-keepers who moved this story.

Yet, it's even more than that. Within the threads of this tender tale is the truth that no matter how dusty, germey, smelly, worn and unlovable we may be, we are still worthy of redemption, care, and the ultimate blessed homecoming.

I'm pretty sure, when I bent to kiss Pup-Pup, I heard a heartbeat, deep in his tattered stuffing. And it was in perfect harmony with the heartbeat of the boy who held him in his hands.