

Those “Welcome Home” Hands

By Shari Miller

“My life is ruined!” bemoaned my middle-school-aged self when I was told I would need to start wearing glasses.

My dad listened to my wailing (drama queen that I was!) but said very little. Instead, he went to my mom’s sewing table and selected a pattern of a dress she was making for me. On the front of the pattern was the image of a girl much like me with the same haircut and about my age. He deliberately picked up a pen and, as I watched, drew a set of wire-rimmed glasses on the picture of that model. He then showed it to me, smiled, pointed to the picture, squeezed my shoulder and said, “Pretty good-looking, huh?” My self-esteem rose in that very instant.

Relationships matter! My most treasured relationships are those that involve family. As I grew to adulthood, entered my college years, and became a mother myself, I knew I could always come home. I anticipated that I would be welcomed with hands that beckoned, nurtured, and comforted.

The hands of a parent ... can you picture them? Close your eyes and think for a moment of those hands. Are they wrinkled or smooth? Do they sport jewelry? What do the fingernails look like? Are there scars on those hands?

When I close my eyes, the hands I picture are those of my now sainted dad.* I picture not only the *physical* appearance of his hands but also the *actions* those hands had performed: praying; hugging; writing sermons, Bible studies, and hymns; lovingly refinishing furniture; and nurturing his garden.

It was a blessing to be raised in a loving, nurturing, and comforting home where good relationships mattered and where I knew I would always be welcomed home!

Picture the Hands of our Father in heaven. They are mighty Hands that welcome us as His children because of the scarred and pierced Hands of Jesus, our Savior from sin. They are Hands that encourage and comfort us as He welcomes us home, just as (in my mind’s eye) my dad’s hand was enfolded in the pierced Hands of Jesus as he was welcomed home in heaven. What a beautiful image!

Yes, good relationships matter. But the most important relationship is the one we have with our Triune God. This relationship was established by Him: He reached out to us, putting His name on us in Baptism and claiming us as His dearly loved children; He joined us to Himself and to the death and resurrection of Christ; He is our Father, our Savior, and our Comforter. His relationship with us is an eternal one.

I can picture it ... can you? The pierced Hands of Jesus, grasping mine, smiling, maybe squeezing my shoulder, and saying, “Welcome home!”

*Rev. Eugene W. Juergensen, 1928–2009



btw... btw is the acronym for “by the Way (Jesus).” It sets the tone for the current issue.