

A LITURGY FOR

Responding to a Child's Needs

HANNAH GREER

O Father, I abide in the beautiful truth
that I can come to you expectantly,
knowing you will hear me and answer me.
You bend to listen to my pleas
for help and comfort and
guidance and strength.
You carry me always.
You never tire of it,
and I depend upon your dependability
to comfort and hold me.

And yet, sometimes the voices of my own
children become so continuous and exhausting
and overwhelming. I am so easily put out and
wearied by the whining, tugging, grabbing, and
crying to be continually held and attended to.

In my humanity, I am confronted
with my many limitations.
I am so easily given to selfishness, exhaustion,
tedium, frustration, and irritation.

My back aches and my neck and shoulders are
afire from hoisting small children up
again and again and again
and balancing them on my hip
while trying to accomplish my tasks for the day.

How easily my sin can twist
the joyful blessing of holding a child
into drudgery and a wearisome task.
Is this not what I prayed for, Lord,
when I asked you to fill my arms with children?

I am so like the Israelites, who complained
though you rescued them from their enemies,
who complained though you rained manna
from heaven and provided water from a rock.

Yet you never tire of coming
to the aid of your children.

Father, give me the capacity I need
to respond lovingly to my children who cry out
to be picked up and held again and again.
Remind me of the blessed truth
that while I hold my little ones, you hold me.
Let me display to them what it looks like
to joyfully lay down one's life for another.
Help me to show them that
while I will fail them at times,
you will never fail them,
and you will always hold us fast.

Amen.