

Have you ever felt unwelcome or unwanted? Have you wondered whether you were an accident or an intrusion? Have you wondered whether you belonged?

I was born to an unwed\* mother who was barely past her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. When I was 9 years old, my mother sent my brother and me away. We went to live with our great aunt and uncle, because these good people stepped in to keep us from going to a Boy's home. They ultimately adopted us, even though they already had four children. More recently, my marriage of over 20 years was ended, rejected and unwanted.

I know what it is like to think you were an accident, to believe you were an obligation, to wonder if you belong, to feel unwanted. Perhaps you know these feelings too.

But there is *no question* about this with God. In the form of Jesus, he gave up Heaven and went through Hell to give you and me the *choice* to become part of His family.

My good friend Steve Codara gave me a *glimpse* of God's heart when he said regarding the adoption of young Sergei, “I want this with all of my being!” *This* is how God wants you and me – with *all* of His being.

So deep is his desire for you that in a very real sense, he would do *anything* for you – give up Heaven, live among men, die on a cross, *even become guilty of your sin*.

This communion is a time to be grateful as we remember this gift, this sacrifice, and bask in God's love and His family, where we are *wanted* and we *belong*.

\*Or so I believed most of my life. Actually conceived to an unwed mother who married another man by the time I was born. My father, her fiance, was killed in a car accident about 7 months before I was born.

Prayer for the bread:

Abba Father,

Praise and Glory and Honor be to your name - the one who sets the lonely in families; the one who deeply desires a relationship with us, the one who formed us intentionally, who knows us fully and loves us completely; the one who wants us passionately.

You gave up your own child so that each of us can become one too.

Thank you for this bread that represents the body of your son, given for us. Help us now to remember and honor this gift.

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David's son Absalom became his enemy, setting out to overthrow him, to disgrace him, even to kill him. Absalom died in the process. In a similar way we became God's enemies, and we died in the process.

David said, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you – O Absalom, my son, my son.”

David felt this about Absalom, his enemy. God felt the same about us, so much so that he *did* die in our place. God pursued us, with love, when we were his enemies. There is *no doubt* that we are *wanted*.

We are not simply God's servants. We are his *chosen* and *cherished* sons and daughters.

Prayer for the cup:

Great and Holy Father, who deeply loves every one of us:

Thank you for this cup that represents the blood of your son shed to cleanse even the hands that spilled it, our hands.

Thank you for this forgiveness, for this trading of places, for this redeeming love that pursues us and welcomes us into your family.

Let this cup remind us of your gift and to treat each other as royalty – sons and daughters of our great King.

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God gives us everything, even when He knows what it feels like to be unwanted and rejected, and to have us cling to and honor his gifts more than Him.

Let us honor God today, as our Father, in whose adoption we are secure, by trusting Him and loving our family enough to share the wealth and blessings He has given us.

Prayer for Offering:

Our Father in Heaven, who gives us all good gifts, love and mercy and grace, and family, and riches: Thank you for your kindness and blessings. Help us to hold these in an open hand and to be generous like you. Help us to honor you with our giving.