

On Loss and Losses, a Reflection ...

The cemetery is familiar territory, a solemn respite in Midwestern environs. A family plot is a place where a young sibling, both parents, and my husband's earthly remains reside. We gather in scattered twos and threes, a stone urn our focal point. Early morning sun gleams gold, long rays streaking turf. We shiver for autumn chill penetrates. We are here for Pat, oldest Carlson sibling. "The smartest one" lost her daunting mental capacity a little more than three years ago. Her keen awareness as cognition failed wounded her heart, our hearts. We watched her slip, slip away.



image credit: www.123rf.com/profile_petarpaunchev

Sorrow upon sorrow, loss upon loss. How does one survive pain that still nags, that looms in early morning hours when sleep eludes, that brings quick tears of recognition as waves hit? Grief, like the cemetery, is familiar territory. Even two and one half years out there is a distinct possibility those waves, that pain will appear. And Grief stirs images of last breaths, last visages, a body going cold, a spirit gone to Jesus — a separation.

How do we bear it? Those who are left. How does Vern restructure his life? No more twice a day visits to the Hospice room. No more wheel chair outings into the blue-gold of early fall. No more songs to sing outside to the love of his life, voice muffled by gentle wind, bird song. He, his

children, Pat's remaining siblings, others who loved her
stand by graveside, listen to Scripture, sing *Amazing Grace*.

Each is handed a long-stemmed pink rose, her favorite.
Vern's alone is red, the color of love. He is the first, with
quiet grace to place the one red rose. We follow, lay the
roses gently at the foot of the urn. Sun streaks beauty on the
gravesite, all red and pink and gold against green.

We hover, we embrace, tears flow. The twos and threes
walk slowly to parked cars. We are moving on. Life beckons.
Tasks, responsibilities remain, and begin to impinge upon
the solitude, the grief, the pain, the longing.

We can go on because of these words:

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

