

My Sister's Tears

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My Sister's Tears – Some thoughts at the premiere

I was always told to take care of my little sister. She was almost nine years younger than I was and I was the eldest, the responsible one. Mum let me know in no uncertain terms that her well being was my responsibility.

For some reason she decided that on the 5th of November 2003 she would leave this life. No one knows why and no messages were left for her family. In fact, in the only message she left behind that evening she said she had no family. I had been shattered by the death of our niece the year before; another who sought to leave this world at her own determined time. My sister Heather dying was unbearable.

But what I remember is a lovely little girl dancing and playing in the yard. I remember a beautiful little girl smiling and bringing great joy to a family that was a little emotionally challenged. The twirly dress she wore to dance in, the hair pulled back like it should be, the love my heart bore for her; such memories flood my heart.

So what can I make of such things? What can I do to intervene for others? What can I do to make the world a place where these things can be discussed and confronted and where the pain that those minds and hearts go through might be mitigated in some way?

How useful – all I can do is write music!

But this music may lead to discussions amongst young people, like those performing for you tonight or between a parent and a child in this audience. It could make you aware of the blackness that permeates the lives of some of those around us.

Or this music could be just the reminiscences of a precious memory of a little girl in a twirly dress.

I have had to question how to come to terms with her passing, especially given my recently found Christian faith and those considerations that come from that position. What of mortal sin; what of redemption?

A young friend spoke with me about such loss yesterday and over night he emailed me something that encapsulates how I understand this emotional place I find myself in. It may assist you also.

The article he sent, anonymous as I much as I can gather, says:

“God is infinitely more understanding, loving, and motherly than any mother on earth. We need not worry about the fate of anyone, no matter the cause of death, who exits this world honest, over-sensitive, gentle, over-wrought, and emotionally-crushed. God's understanding and compassion exceed our own.

Knowing all of this however, doesn't necessarily take away our pain (and anger) at losing someone to suicide. Faith and understanding aren't meant to take our pain away but to give us hope, vision, and support as we walk within it.

A proper human and faith response to suicide should not be horror, fear for the victim's eternal salvation, or guilty second-guessing about how we failed this person. Suicide is indeed a horrible way to die, but we must understand it (at least in most cases) as a sickness, a disease, an illness, a tragic breakdown within the emotional immune-system. And then we must trust, in God's goodness, God's understanding, God's power to descend into hell, and God's power to redeem all things, even death, even death by suicide.”