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Faith in a Time of Doubt: In the Forest

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"This essay is a partial response to a friend who sent me his book of poetry. It became more than a response to his book. It became a thoughtful look at my own faith."

FROM OUR GUEST WRITER



Dee Hogan

FAITH IN A TIME OF DOUBT

IN THE FOREST

This essay is a partial response to a friend who sent me his book of poetry. It became more than a response to his book. It became a thoughtful look at my own faith.

Your entire book is impressive, but it is “Sonnet In The Storm” that mesmerized me. It is a sound retelling, a beautiful abundance of lyricism and story. In my case, it took me to another place. It prompted great growth in my thinking. You say that the ‘Savior dies anew every time His great cause is twisted etc....’ This made me think there’s more to this. It’s not a series of deaths that He dies. After the first death, Christ’s death has been continuous. Then I asked myself, does it go further than that? True atrocities are happening continuously, but my thought was that the Mass is always being celebrated somewhere in the world every minute of the day. So Christ’s death is continuous as is His Resurrection every time the Mass is celebrated. There’s the build-up of the early prayers of the Kyrie, Gloria etc., through the Sanctus and Agnus Dei, the transubstantiation, and continues as another Mass starts or is in progress somewhere else. Christ is always dying and we are always crying for Him as we did as children. There are hundreds of implications here and, mostly, I hate the sorrow of it all, all the tears I cried as a child staring at the cross, or hearing the pounding of the nails.

When I discussed this with my husband, who studies theology, he explained that the celebration of the death and Resurrection was the main purpose of the Mass. He was not surprised at all by my insight and agreed with me that Christ’s death is continuous.

I wish that we had been taught to celebrate the life of Christ more than His death and that the emphasis had been to follow the goodness of His life in detail for those three years rather than suffer every time we studied the church walls of the stations. The sorrow should have been overshadowed by the glory of joining the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That sorrow is still

in “the memory of my emotions” as the great Stanislavski pointed out at Actor’s Studio in the fifties. It still rises every time I see a cross, with or without the body.

But my faith far overshadows my doubt. When I feel lost, I revel in the landscape of my life. It is a wonderful forest of love. I became a writer as soon as I could form words. I am a poet, a fiction writer, a memoirist, and an essayist with dozens of published writings and a willingness to share even more. I am a teacher, still, after forty-three years of taking care of children and engaging them in profound dialogue with some of the greatest literature ever written. Most of all, I am a wife who has loved and been married to the same man for thirty-nine years who believes as I do in the goodness of people and our responsibility to them. So when I feel lost, I stand still and let the landmarks of my life give me direction. I always return to the most profound tenant of my faith: “I am my brother’s keeper.” There is no sorrow in that, only bonding with a Trinity or Infinity that is endlessly joyful.



Archways in Boboli Gardens, Florence
(Photo by Michael Costanzo)