

Thoughts of a Manger

Colleagues,

On December 1, with arms full of greenery for the family Advent wreath, my sister-in-law Linda Schroeder was walking back across the street from the garden shop to get to her car. That's all she can remember. Witnesses say she was struck by a hit-and-run driver (who a day later did "turn himself in.") The orthopedic surgeon at St. Louis University hospital, who went to work on the shattered leg, the multiple-fractured pelvis, etc., told her later that she's a "statistical anomaly." "How so?" she asked. "People with injuries like yours bleed to death by the time the ambulance gets them to the hospital," he said.

So she's miraculously alive. The family-clan and larger community thank God. Linda too gets theological—and doxological even—as she faces 6 weeks of toe-to-tummy motionlessness before her rehab therapy can even be considered. Here's a Christmas poem from her hospital bed to close out Thursday Theology for A.D.2000.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

Thoughts of a Manger by Linda Schroeder

. . . while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered . . . and she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger. After the car hit her, they scooped her up and delivered her to the emergency room – and they repaired her with sutures and staples, metal plate, screws, rods and pins and braces and laid her in a hospital bed.

*Here I lie cradled in a hospital bed,
snatched in a moment from independent living,
self-determination and free range of motion,
sentenced to weeks, maybe months, of total dependency,
helplessness and captivity,
transformed instantly from fully active adulthood to an
almost infantile
state of existence.*

*And as I lie here,
looking up at life from a new perspective,
feeling swaddled in God's embrace,
I begin to wonder if this is even a hint of how it was for
Jesus.*

*There he lay in a manger,
drawn from throughout the cosmos and beyond to the confines
of planet Earth,
sentenced to many months of abject dependency and
helplessness, trapped in speechlessness and non-locomotion,
transformed metaphysically and metaethically from omnipotent
divinity to totally human infancy.*

*Incredible! Unimaginable!
Yet I do believe – – – and I can only begin to imagine.
I wonder what it was like for Jesus.*

*Here I lie in a hospital bed.
There he lay in a manger.*

*At least I can think clearly and speak. I can communicate
where it hurts and when I need to use the bedpan.
I can feed myself if someone places the food where I can
reach it.
I can use the phone and carry on my ministry through a band
of faithful COPE(*) disciples.*

*Many more than a few shepherds and wise men
have called and come
in shock, amazement and devotion,
bearing gifts of cards and flowers,
hugs and prayers.*

*My mother is not here to ponder these things, but I myself
have time aplenty for pondering.*

*I consider how my deprivation only hints at his.
I wonder what redemptive purpose my suffering may yet serve,
while never doubting the salvific nature of his earthly
sojourn and suffering.*

*I hope without assurance that I will rise again to
walk on my own two feet,
while his rising sustains, guarantees my confidence that
nothing can ever separate us from God's love.*

*Here I lie in a hospital bed.
There he lay in a manger.*

*I wonder what it was like for Jesus. And in wonderment and
jubilation I join the angel chorus:
Glory to God in the highest!!
Peace to God's people on earth!!*

(*) [COPE stands for "Congregation – Offender Partnership Enterprise," an ex-offender after-care ministry. Honchoed by Linda for the past 16 years here in St. Louis, Missouri, it is now drawing national attention.]