

## *Journals of a mother about Daniel #4*

*Sun June 18 2017 Daniel's 8<sup>th</sup> day*

(See <http://www.orthodox.net/daniel> for more journals from Daniel's mother.)

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Written Sunday morning, looking back at Friday, as I hadn't yet journaled about that day. Ironic, because we mostly stayed "home" that day, because of the rain.

Friday evening, we went to Gemma's house. She was one of the kind women we had met across the street at the café, who had warmly invited us to her home. Her husband was to be gone, as he had other plans. But as it turned out, his other plans were with the Mexican Ambassador, whose flight had been delayed, so he was still at home. He worked for Human Rights Watch. Daniel would have *loved* to talk with him. The five of us sat there around the kitchen table and talked about everything in the world. They were Jewish. Living in Germany. Even in this last year, they had experienced anti-semitism in their own life, as they worked in the field of human rights. Amazing. We humans can be so wrong. We told them that we hoped to walk tomorrow to the sites Daniel had been and had sent me pictures of. Gemma whipped out her computer, found each spot, plotted it on maps, and printed them out. She offered a couple of additional recommendations that she thought might be meaningful. She wrote into our notebook how to call a taxi using her company to pay for it, if we found ourselves in need. We left, feeling we had encountered some of God's sweetness.

Written Sunday morning, 5:51 AM Berlin time

IT is Sunday. It is 5:51 AM. It was a week ago. A week ago, you were drowning, my love. A week ago you were gasping for air, you were flailing, you were crying out to our dear Savior for help. I'm so sorry, baby. I'm so sorry I wasn't there to save you. I wasn't there to forbid you to go swimming, and to insist that you obey your mother. I woke 15 minutes ago, and daddy said, "Marina, it is Sunday morning. It's been a week now."

I cried again, and prayed, and pictured, and blocked pictures, and called pictures up again. I tried to be there with you, my love. Oh, how I love you. I am back here at the computer, to type you up again.

Oh, dear God. How do I go on?

Anna, my first granddaughter, Daniel's first niece, wrote a poem and sent it to me. It has been sitting here on this paper since she sent it on Friday, waiting to enter this log.

“From Anna

He was loved.  
He was a genius,  
a morning star  
destined to change the world.  
He's gone.  
A young life  
cut short so soon—  
some would say wasted.  
Some would say full  
of truth and meaning.  
He had but  
one goal in life:  
live for humanity.  
And he did.  
Everyone he met  
loved him, saw  
what he was:  
a morning star.  
Kind, gentle, brilliant  
and troubled by the pain  
in the world.  
Everyone he spoke to  
was better for it,  
no one was too small  
for his notice.

This one brave soldier  
in the Great War of life  
made a difference  
and changed the world.  
He was loved.”

Such profundity in a 13 year old. I wish I could wrap her up in my arms right now, and console her while she and I both sob. One set of tears consoling another set of tears. I love you, my Anna. I can still hold you, in this life. Your parents can hold you. Let them, my love.

Yesterday was a hard day. We knew it would be hard, but it was a different kind of hard than we expected. We planned to go to the places Daniel had been to. We wanted to see what he saw. We wanted to go to *the place*. We wanted to pray there and leave a small memorial. The shops we had been to yesterday hadn't had those tall 7-day memorial candles. 7 days. 1 week. 1 week ago. The next shop that had been recommended didn't open till 9, so we couldn't start till then. We went to breakfast, then walked to the shop. It was not yet open, so we sat on that big rock in the park just across the street, and waited. Sadly, they didn't have one either. "God will provide," Christina said. We'd keep our eyes open on our walk. We would find one.

We headed out. The roads here do strange things. Kind of like the moving sidewalks at Hogwarts. We didn't arrive at the place we thought we would at the end of that road. Another kind Berliner helped us. There is a broad, straight road through Berlin called Bismarcke Strasse. Most of the portion we walked goes through a Central Park, NYC style, with gardens and various memorials. We stopped at each one and took the same pictures Daniel had taken and sent us.

The crowd grew as we walked. Then Bismarcke Strasse was closed to car traffic. We saw barriers erected. More and more people went by on their bikes. Tents were up ahead. A loudspeaker in the distance, talking to the crowd. I asked someone and they said there was a big, annual bike race tomorrow, and there were preliminary events today. The crowd grew quite large. We passed the Brandenburg gate. This heralded our entrance into that area of the city where everything changed. With one exception, the events and people we interacted with were rude, or at least indifferent and matter-of-fact.

The lovely event: We saw to our right, on the other side of a very wide sidewalk, the American Embassy, with an American Flag hanging. Down on the ground was something lying, leaning against the wall of the building. A wreath? With flowers? Oh my God. For Daniel?? Had somebody laid a wreath in honor of the young American who had died a few days earlier? We rushed to the wreath. I tried to make out the words on the ribbons, but it is hard to read unfamiliar words through tears. FS asked someone nearby. They suggested it was for Helmut Kohl, who had died yesterday. He was the leader of the European Union, maybe? Not sure. Supposedly my computer is connected to wifi but it isn't letting me google to make sure. This happens a lot. But the flowers were more than one day old. They were several days old. A wreath would not be left at the American Embassy for a European Union political figure. There were three small eternal flame kind of candles, the kind we had looked for in several stores but been unable to find. I confess, we took one. We had a candle now for Daniel's memorial where we planned to pray, when we got to where *it* happened. I feel so sure that someone placed that there for Daniel. Maybe Priscilla, the embassy representative, who had had the difficult job of relating to me, back on the awful Monday morning when this all first started, what had happened. I will call her again Monday and ask, and thank her.

It grew noisier. Road construction barriers. Buildings being renovated. Car and pedestrian traffic being rerouted. Right next to the river, Gemma had told us, was a small building by itself, with a statue of a mother and child. The roof of the building was open, so that sun and rain and snow came down on this mother and child. I hadn't gotten a picture of that statue from Daniel, but Gemma had told us about it and suggested it might be a meaningful place to visit. *Right by the river.*

It was closed. Tall fences all around, while it was being renovated.

We moved on to the river. Dark water. Concrete walls on each side, punctuated occasionally by concrete steps leading down to the water's edge. Souvenir vendors lined the street. We found what we thought was the right spot, by the Altes Museum. But that didn't make sense...here, the water was very narrow. 40 feet? Not what Jesse had described. Maybe Jesse had meant the Neues Museum. But that didn't fit right either. And the current. It was flowing in the wrong direction. It wasn't making sense. Where should we stand to pray? We couldn't find the right spot. We asked a policeman, explaining whose family we were. He shrugged indifferently and said he didn't know. We moved on to where we thought his body had been taken out of the water, deciding we would pray there, instead of where he had gone into the water.

Noisy. Bustling. Tourists and vendors. Policemen. We picked a spot that would have to do. We set up our little shrine, with our red candle from the American Embassy shrine. We prayed. There was not the catharsis we anticipated and desired. We moved on to the Hostel where he had stayed. His room was occupied by someone else; we wouldn't be able to go in. But they had wifi, and we were weary. We sat down and used the wifi Daniel had used to send pictures back home. Then we headed around the corner and down the street toward the "qba", a Cuban restaurant at which Daniel had last eaten, with Jesse and Dylan and Austin. They were to be open at 2. It was 3. They were closed. We settled on another restaurant, as we were famished. Then we walked another mile to a part of the old Berlin Wall where Daniel and Jesse had had a picture taken of them. Written in English in graffiti style on the wall behind them it said, "Don't be angry when I am not there for you. I will love you always and forever." When I asked Jesse later, he said it was random that they posed there.

All around, there was a different kind of crowd. A lot of young people, sitting, lounging, some sleeping, in an intersection. A couple with flags furled, lying on the ground for now. Occasionally a young person would stand up and say something loud in German and there was a general murmur of response. There was a large contingent of police standing nearby. I asked one in German what was happening. He said they were demonstrating. Against what? He shrugged and smiled. "Against another demonstration."

Near the wall were a few memorials set up in memory of those who had died in the vicinity of the wall, trying to escape East Germany. As I approached one I could hear an audio recording on a loop, listing the dead by name, or "name unknown". I heard, "...20 years old, drowned. (next name) 42 years old, shot. (next name) 29 years old, shot. (next name), 20 years old, drowned." I had to get away from there.

One of our phones was dead, the other dying, the other saying it was connected to wifi but not working. This happened a lot. I asked someone where we could hail a taxi. "In that direction?" I asked, pointing. "No, it is not a good place, there. Go that way instead." So we retraced our steps a little and hailed a taxi. The man brought us to the church. The church was hot, everything in Slavonic. But blessed familiar icons and prayers and hymns, while the regular Saturday evening Vigil

service was going on. At some point I slipped out to cooler temperatures outside, and prayed by myself, then fell asleep, then awoke with the thought to call Tim H and Elizabeth. I hadn't gotten to hear their voices yet. Tim was working on his brother's coffin. Oh my. I told him a little of the day's events. I told him how unsatisfying, indeed disturbing, they had been. What appealed to Daniel in that area? Tim said, "People, mom. People everywhere, from a different walk of life. People Daniel could talk with and learn from, learn something he didn't already know, because that is what he loved to do." I liked that possibility much better than what I had been thinking. Was Daniel enjoying the unsettled upheaval and chaos of that area? Perhaps God had preserved him from going down that path? I liked Tim's suggestion best, but if the latter were correct, then I thanked God.

The kind wife of the priest at the church drove us home. We were exhausted. We had walked 9.6 miles. I showered, felt a little refreshed. We went down the street to dinner, came home. We spoke with Nat and Kevin and Tim and Elizabeth. Decided on a schedule for the day of the funeral, whenever that would be. Still tentatively Thursday, but not certain because of the paperwork that has to be completed. Completed before Daniel can go home...

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*Journals of Daniel's mother. All words are from Marina Holland except lines in Italics (such as this).*

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