

Journals of a mother about Daniel #5

Sun Evening, Monday June 18-19 2017 Daniel's 8th,9th day

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

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Written Sunday evening at 7:45 Berlin time

We talked last night, late, with Tim and Elizabeth and Natalie and Kevin. We talked about how much we miss Daniel. They feel so awful for us and what we are having to do. We feel so awful for them, to have to be at home carrying on with activities of regular life, plus the details regarding preparation for Daniel's funeral, and not having the consolation of the many things happening here. We cried a lot of tears, and comforted each other. We determined a schedule for the day of the funeral; what day that will be is still undetermined, as we have not yet had confirmation when Daniel will be able to come home. We talked about how many people will be coming for the funeral. We think a lot.

My mom and dad and sister Patti will be coming. Patti will fly into the airport, mom and dad will uber to the airport to meet her, and then they will fly together to Dallas. Chris and Kathie will be driving down. Apparently lots of students from OU will be coming, former classmates and teachers from here in McKinney will be coming. And church people.

We took a taxi to church. We had to walk the last few blocks because streets are blocked for the bike race. The weather is beautiful. Skies sunny, gentle breeze, slightly cool temperatures. We enjoyed the walk. The service was all in Slavonic, of course, but it never ceases to amaze me how we always know exactly what is going on. The people were very warm afterwards. I went to the bookstore to buy a shroud and a manly cross for my son. I found a cross in a little bit of a cross shape, with the Theotokos in the center of it. I got that. The man was very compassionate, and ended up *giving* me the shroud and cross. May God have mercy on him for his kindness. I could tell he wanted to *do* something, and so he did what he could. That is exactly how we should all live.

Written Monday morning, 7:45 Berlin time

We spent the afternoon yesterday catching up on email. I think I took a nap, but don't really remember. We tried to get in touch with Gemma but she didn't answer her phone or text message, so we decided to "pop in" to see our new British friend to see if she and her husband would like to join us in the morning for breakfast. They eagerly accepted, and said again and again how glad they were we popped in. So when meet them this morning we will be feeling "peckish" and will "tuck in" to some breakfast!

Some things to share from others. Whenever I share something from someone else, I get their permission first, since others are reading. This sender wished to remain anonymous.

Dear Fr. Seraphim, Matushka Marina, and family--

I write with tears as I recall my own mother's repose two years ago; there is no greater pain in the world, I think, than to lose a close family member so unexpectedly. And with this, I, with the whole brotherhood, weep with you...

I think many of us younger monks and novices have found this indescribable sorrow of yours to strike powerfully close to us-- knowing so intimately and personally Daniel's draw to new horizons, new countries, new ideas... true ideas... Beauty. It's what brought many of us here after our own respective "journeys" through the pits and peaks of this world. As Fr. Seraphim (our Abbot) shared the details of Daniel's last hours with the brotherhood, the room was silenced, cut only by the running of tears. The tragic scene he described so vividly, was, I think, awfully familiar to many of us -- if not directly, then indirectly with regards to close friends or family members. And as we reflected on our love for them, and at the same time our love for you, I think some of us found a heart-breaking love for Daniel... finding in him a kindred spirit and spiritual brother in the same breath that we found him taken from us.

I remember as it were yesterday what it was like to have the world turned upside-down by my mother's repose, having only a bottomless sorrow as a testament to my bottomless love. While that absence will never be filled in the same way as when she was alive, I've found the source of this sorrow... that endless love... to slowly reveal itself to be the greatest testament to the truth of our faith. In the Akathist for a Loved One who has Fallen Asleep, the fourth Ikos speaks of it being pleasing to God to accomplish the salvation of our close ones with our participation, leading us to "offer up their heartfelt cry by our own lips," asking the Lord to "accept our labors for their salvation," and "in our tears to accept their repentance."

I've found this season of mourning to be our time to discover for ourselves the depth of our love for our departed, so that, in God's time, we may allow for Him to transform it into a strength and courage to bear that same love through the rest of our life in good deeds, alms, and prayers-- ultimately with the hope to affect the one we so love by our own growth in and toward Christ.

We embrace you all in Christ's love, even through the embrace of dear Fr. Andre, who has himself brought us joy through the love he is showing to you all. We love you. And know that in the brotherhood, Daniel, too, has the love and prayer of many new spiritual brothers.

With love in Christ,

xxx

Your son Daniel has been on my mind and in my prayers day and night, often since I learned the news of his passing. I am so sorry you're going through this and am praying for you all. I met Daniel 5 years ago at camp and what I remember is that he seemed always to be surrounded by smiles, laughter, and songs. I could see that he has a kind, beautiful soul. I wanted to pass along this video made by a few members of the St Symeon Orthodox Church choir, based out of the church where Vasilios grew up in Birmingham. They are singing "Give Rest" (link at bottom of this email). Hoping that if you choose to listen to it, perhaps you can find even a small amount of consolation. The CD is something I've prayed along with many times after a loved one's departure, and it helps. Daniel goes to join my baby brother who is his same age (God took him when he was born), so I will definitely always remember him as another brother (in Christ) and will keep him in my heart and daily prayers. Praying for you all.

Nadia

Also from Nadia:

Tonight I took the girls to vigil at the Cathedral in Dallas (Fr John is my Fr-Confessor). As I stood there, preoccupied with my two little ones, I suddenly tuned in to what was being read: a reading from the Wisdom of Solomon. Truth be told, I don't usually tune in to all those readings unless I recognize them since it's usually challenging for me to decipher the words being read (due to my hearing impairment). However, this time, the words seemed to ring out so loudly and clearly:

"But the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace. For though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality. And having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded; for God proved them, and found them worthy for Himself. As gold in the furnace hath He tried them, and received them as a burnt offering. And in the time of their visitation they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble. They shall judge the nations, and have dominion over the people; and their Lord shall reign forever. They that put their trust in Him shall understand the truth; and such as be faithful in love shall abide with Him; for grace and mercy are to His Saints, and He hath care for His elect." (Wisdom 3:1-9).

I don't know at which verse the reading ended since I had to look this up after I got home. However, I do distinctly remember hearing the words all the way to "found them worthy to Himself". I stood there and thought of Daniel and said a prayer for him. I felt so inspired and at peace for his soul.

On the way home from church I noticed two streets as I passed them. I've passed these same streets countless times yet it was only today that they stood boldly out to me. There's one in Dallas close to the Cathedral called "Holland St". I saw this and prayed for Daniel and your whole family. Then in Denton I saw a street called "Holland Ln". I prayed for Daniel again and thanked God for letting me see these things. Whenever I see a river or pass over the Lewisville Lake (or pass over Lake Ray Roberts when driving a long time for my two napping girls), I think of Daniel. He is such a blessing, I can see that. I'm so grateful to have seen him not long ago at St Nicholas on a Sunday. I remember recognizing him instantly and yet being so surprised at how tall he had gotten and how much older he looked compared to his days at camp 5 years ago, the only other time I'd seen him. I saw how he stood with his nieces and nephews and was holding one (or more) at one point. It was a sweet picture.

I think it's a temptation to think that we're not supposed to care deeply for the passing of someone we don't know, or to think that our love is only supposed to extend to the hurting family members who remain behind. I've learned, however, that Daniel is my brother in Christ too, not only in understanding, but in a mystical reality.

Anyway I wanted to share these things with you, especially on this day. My prayers are going up for you all and for the soul of Daniel. Much love to you all. Nadia

And from an anonymous person:

xxx has been yearning for the church, and just being there. We were at the service yesterday, and he smirked for the first time since the news of Dan's passing. At that moment, I knew the church is where we belonged. After the service, he looked at me and said "sweetie, you don't have to worry about me, I'm better now", I knew that was all God's doing. Praise God!

We are praying for you all, and for Daniel. We love you both.

Thank you to everyone who has written. Hundreds of messages have been sent, not counting what is on Facebook, since I am not on Facebook. But Christina logged on and showed me. Wow. You young people out there who knew Daniel at school, thank you for your memories, your stories, your deep love and respect for my son. Thank you for your kind words. I do hope to meet many of you at the funeral.

So today we will breakfast with Gemma and her husband. At some point we will be meeting with Annika and she will give us various state documents that will be required for various reasons. We will pack. We will see Fr Andre again this evening. And tomorrow, we leave. Just like that. May God grant Godspeed to my son, following us hopefully the next day. I wish I could see him one last time before we leave. But I took a picture. I will look at this picture as often as I need to, and caress him that way. I thank you all, so much. I don't know if this will be the last journal entry or not. I know the days following the funeral will be a blur, and will be spent with family and friends, not leaving much time to think and to write. So if I do not write again, please know from the bottom of my heart, I appreciate your love and prayers, so very much. I appreciate the support you have given me by allowing me to share my journal with you. Please, pray to God, for your self as well as for dear +Daniel. Amen.

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

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