

March 31, 2020

Dear Friends,

I have to be honest, I'm finding it rather difficult to write or reflect today because my brother Patrick passed away on Saturday and I am still in that early phase of processing and questioning. I do need, however to tell a bit of his story, as part of my own mourning, so I appreciate you being there to hear it as I publically 'get it out' as I like to say. Remember grief is what is inside us, but mourning is getting it out so we can move toward healing. So please bear with me and indulge me while I share a bit...

Because my Dad was a Patrick and my Mom was Patricia, we couldn't have any more Pat's in the family, so we always called my brother Skip. Skip was living in a long term health care facility, a nursing home, even though he was only 68 years old. I had not been able to visit him or see him for several weeks due to the lockdown caused by the COVID virus. I am not sure if he died of the virus or not, because I was told he was never tested, even though he had a horrible cough when I spoke with him on the phone just two days before he died, but for some reason the facility did not think he had any symptoms. He sounded pretty sick to me. He had a lot of health problems, but I didn't expect him to die.

My brother's life is a very sad, tragic story really and I won't go into too much detail here, but he lost his only child, my niece Jessica, to an overdose in 2002 and then his wife, Anita, passed away in 2017. Because of his health issues, -he was totally blind and had Hepatitis among other severe issues, Skip could not live alone. He was the eldest of us five siblings; my sister Kelly died by suicide in 2000. I am the youngest, and all I can really remember is that throughout his life, my brother always struggled with drug addiction and mental health issues.

His sad death reflects the end of a sad life really. It's also quite sad that during this strange time of isolation, I could not see my brother one more time; his body was sent for direct cremation and we will have an interment of his ashes after this time of social distancing is over. I take some comfort in that I was able to visit him just before the lockdown was enforced and we were able to talk and pray together. I also take comfort that he is now once again with his family; they are all together on the other side along with my parents, who actually were married on this day some 69 years ago. It seems now that there are more of my family members on that side than here.

The Coronavirus has very much hit home for me, even if Skip didn't die of it, the entire situation surrounding all this is deeply affected by the virus and the radical shift it has caused in our way of life. He will not be counted among the vast numbers of those who are dying of this virus every day, which makes me wonder how many more have died during this crisis and have not been counted? How many people out there are also unable to see their relatives one last time or to have a proper funeral service? It feels like we've been robbed of something very important and sacred.

I have a very close, spiritual relationship with one of my nieces, and when I texted her about her uncle passing away, we had a brief conversation in which she said, "It's such a spiritual time, are you

feeling it uncle Kev?" It was then that I was reminded that although this is not how I would have scripted my brother's passing, God has a plan. Nothing in God's world happens by mistake. I replied that I am feeling it too. I said that I think it is a spiritual time because we are all standing very close to the curtain that hangs between this world and the next. She immediately responded, "Yes! That's it!" My niece then asked me very honestly and frankly, "What should I do?" I simply responded, "Be." And then I said, "And be not afraid."

Thank you for listening, you have all been my support group this week and I deeply appreciate the affection and prayers sent our way. We will get through this, not without changes or without some scars, but we will prevail as we are being carried.. Just try to tune into what my niece was saying, - it is indeed a spiritual time. Although we are standing very close to that curtain, that veil, there is nothing to truly be afraid of. We are powerless so we may as well let go absolutely. Let's live in love rather than fear right now more than ever.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

Peace and Serenity, Kevin

<https://www.jacquelinemryanfh.com/memorials/patrick-c-keelen/4144233/index.php>