

July 10, 2020

We have had 5 funerals this week, all of them but one marking the deaths of people who lived long lives. Their stories are all pretty much the same and at the same time remarkably different.

Probably, more than before, I go home humbled at having been just a part of that life as being the last one to have some official role in their history. The finality of the liturgy is intensified with all of the public health protocols we need to observe, none starker than faces masked, so that I cannot read the feelings on those faces.

Debbie Lund and Karin Jurek work with the families to produce a participation booklet, more souvenir than actual, so that even though we cannot sing, only Karin sings, the familiar melodies and words hopefully bring some degree of consolation and comfort and linger on as the grieving continues.

I encourage eulogies or words of remembrance from family members at the beginning, in an effort to humanize the experience, and those are often achingly difficult to speak and to hear, but the sincerity and grief comes through loud and clear.

It is a naked faith that we display, a naked and vulnerable faith that we use to work our way through a lifetime of love and hope and memory, we act without props or pretenses in trying as best as we can to honor the fact that a human being has been born, has lived, and is now dead.

I suppose that is what we do always, but these days of isolation make it all the sadder, at least for me.

These words put me in the mind of Jayne Kenyon's poem, *Otherwise*:

I got out of bed  
on two strong legs.  
It might have been  
otherwise. I ate  
cereal, sweet  
milk, ripe, flawless  
peach. It might  
have been otherwise.  
I took the dog uphill  
to the birch wood.  
All morning I did  
the work I love.  
At noon I lay down  
with my mate. It might

have been otherwise.  
We ate dinner together  
at a table with silver  
candlesticks. It might  
have been otherwise.  
I slept in a bed  
in a room with paintings  
on the walls, and  
planned another day  
just like this day.  
But one day, I know,  
it will be otherwise.