

Jesus wept (John 11:35)

Whenever a Dubliner saw someone do something clumsy or stupid he might have exclaimed: *Jesus wept!* It was a way of saying it was enough to make Jesus weep.

People say this is the shortest sentence in the Gospel – and I’m not going to argue the point. Actually its shortness carries a clout – almost as if in recording the words the scribe himself was moved to shed a tear. The passage occurs when Jesus is led by the sisters of Lazarus to his tomb and the crowd that accompanies them says of Jesus: *See how much he loved him.*

Now I have lived a long life and have loved significant people – at varying levels of intensity. Maybe love isn’t really the word. Maybe it’s friendships (which is a kind of love) that has marked my years - outside my immediate family. But in reading last Sunday’s Beatitude: *Blessed are they who mourn* – the word “mourn” reminded me of how much I mourn my wife’s long condition of dementia and how very much I still experience the anguish that I found so difficult to repress when I walked her into her new and enduring commitment to assisted living. The tears almost did flow when I didn’t lead *her* but *she led me* down the ramp into her future residence – as if she *knew* what her future was to be and was brave enough to face it.

Anguish. Is that what the Gospel of John’s brief sentence: *Jesus wept!* really meant, making him indeed so human? Anguish. The dictionary traces anguish to the Greek and Latin roots having to do with being strangled, throttled, a tightening of one’s throat, a pain, a pang that is both physical *and* mental – the whole enchilada! In other words, anguish as I experience it even now regarding Jane makes of my love for her something sensual in the most chaste of possibilities. True love hurts! As the old song says, though with a different connotation: *You can’t have one without the other.*

So given my experiencing a love that is integral with anguish, is it that kind of love that is exhibited in John’s description of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus where it says *Jesus wept?* And is that not what he exhibited in all his healings and parables throughout his story: his ability to weep, to hurt to an extreme – and not only over his friend but over the oppressed throughout the world who populate his story? An anguished love best descriptive of the Source out of which our universe has emerged and which we call God.

I mean every time – and it is often – when my anguish as *integral to my love* for Jane rises up to choke me – I wonder: why just Jane? why does my anguished care limit itself to this dear friend and not extend itself to concern about a whole world of needful human and other beings who share my origin out of the Source from which we rise? Is anguish, heartfelt pain, the existential Angst required by philosophy as well as by Scripture the thing that is missing so often in our efforts to help the really anguished millions of our world? We can think and do and analyze – deal with the anguish of others with our intellects and will power, but what about being heart broken? It’s the missing element whose absence makes humanist, indeed humane efforts to solve problems bog down in argument. And Jesus weeps.

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