NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Boston Marathon tragedy illuminates importance of love, community

April Gutierrez | Apr. 18, 2013 Young Voices

The Monday after Easter, our pastor reminded us that there are 40 days in Lent but 50 days of Easter. We are a resurrection people, and living into the hope of Christ risen brings hope to others. Yet this Easter season, I am finding myself choking back tears each time I try to sing alleluia.

How do we receive God's grace in our lives in the midst of tragedy? Monday morning, as soon as I woke up, I was excited to have already received a photograph of my sister at the starting line of the Boston Marathon (the benefit of the three-hour time difference living on the West Coast). I instantly posted the picture to my Facebook page and noted my excitement to instantly receive text updates of her progress.

Alert, 8:17 a.m.: 10 km; time: 52:27: pace: 8:26

Alert, 9:22 a.m.: Half-marathon; time: 1:57:07; pace: 8:56

Alert, 10:23 a.m.: 30 km; time: 2:58:52; pace: 9:35

The next message received didn't come from my text alerts, but from my younger sister in Arizona. She was crying, asking if I had heard what happened. As I stood in a mall food court, everything seemed to be spinning around me.

"What, what?" I asked.

"Mom just called screaming into the phone, 'We're OK, we're OK,' but she didn't sound OK!"

My family was able to find my sister among the other athletes pretty quickly to know that they were all physically unharmed. Three generations were there, about half a mile from the finish line. My relief knowing that my family was not hurt was surrounded by sadness and guilt that other people were learning of different news.

When death enters the season of life, how do we receive God's grace? On April 7, Msgr. Lloyd Torgerson preached [1] on the wounds of the resurrected Christ reminding us of a God who accompanies us through the darkness. My sister who was running the race told me that early that morning, she was angry with God that her pace was slow because she was not feeling well. She told me her prayer was that if she was going to be sick for the Boston Marathon, that Jesus needed to walk with her. In the back of our minds, we knew that her expected finish time was around four hours.

The season of life was twofold standing at the start line that morning for her. Qualifying for Boston was a goal she set and worked toward, sacrificing greatly and working hard to achieve. She also was standing at the start line newly employed, with her whole family there to witness the feat: her husband, mother, two grade-school children, our pregnant sister and one of her dearest friends. I mention this because at the finish line of every race sit incredible journeys, sacrifices and stories of hope.

In his homily, Msgr. Torgerson also says we need religion. Not only to be spiritual, but to be a part of a community. I lived in Boston right off the Fenway for about four years at the beginning of my marriage as a graduate student at Boston College while my husband studied at Berklee College of Music. During our short stint living there, my heart grew to include Boston as part of where home is. From the Red Sox breaking the curse to the restructuring of the archdiocese merging our university parish with another, I matured into adulthood in this beautiful city. So when I knew my family was stuck with no running trains, traffic in gridlock and tens of thousands of people with nowhere to go, with athletes waiting for water, food and medical attention, scared and unsure, we called our pastor at St. Cecilia's parish, just three blocks away. Although he was out of the country, the rectory door was soon opened to them, where they found shelter, safety and the companionship of our pastor's family, one of whom ran that day. Although we were 3,000 miles away, our church, our faith community, put four walls around my family.

This week, I thought about the support this church provided me in my early 20s navigating adulthood, a new ministry career and marriage. Since moving from Boston almost 10 years ago, it is incredible to me that we are still so connected to that place and to real community in faith. I am profoundly grateful to claim that I am religious and spiritual because through being religious and engaged with my community of faith, I continue to find refuge and strength for me and for others.

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, host fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." -- Romans 12:9-13

[April Gutierrez is a graduate of Boston College School the Theology and Ministry.]

Editor's note: We can send you an email alert every time a Young Voices column is posted. Go to this page and follow directions: **Email alert sign-up** [2].

Source URL (retrieved on *2016-05-30 14:38*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/boston-marathon-tragedy-illuminates-importance-love-community

Links:
[1] http://www.stmonica.com/mediacenter/2013/04/homily---4713---octave-of-east.html
[2] http://ncronline.org/../../email-alert-signup