

Dust

Category: Alone

written by Praniya Jakkamsetti | June 12, 2023

"From dust we came, and to dust we shall return," she whispered to me. Her face brightened up her compact 80-square-foot room. I held her hand, decorated with jewels from all around the world. She had just been transferred here from another memory care facility, and I'd decided to sit down with her every Sunday. Stacked in her lap were a Bible, a devotional book, and a journal. "What do you write in there?" I asked, pointing to the beaded journal.

She offered no reply.

She had been living with multiple sclerosis for the past 25 years. She was a wife, a mother of four, and a grandmother of nine. Yet she had no visitors.

Our Sundays together consisted of sitting in front of the facility and watching the road for black Subaru SUVs. "Why do you think he will come?" I asked her. "He's my son; I have faith in him," she replied with a soft smile.

Our Sundays also consisted of my wheeling her to the facility's 10:00 a.m. church service. There, she would pull out her journal, which I learned was a faith journal. A journal where she listed all the ways her faith has helped her. Number 18 on her list was "Because of God, I have hope that I am not alone."

I have often wondered about the loneliness of life. How one can feel lonely even in a crowded room. How even the most extroverted people can go home to emptiness. As I fed my patient, fixed her wheelchair, read books to her, caught her falls, and held her hand during every tremble, I realized that her hope gave her a sense of comfort in her loneliness. Having blind faith allowed her to wake up with a sense of peace. It did not depend on needing a true understanding of why her life was limited to a room with only pictures of people who never visited. People who were slowly fading from her mind.

Fading like dust.

From dust we came, and to dust we shall return. With hope, there's comfort even in such a lonely statement.

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