

Friday, April 4: No Children

Written by Elizabeth Snader, Campus Minister, University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, VA

<https://open.spotify.com/track/5cxnSTLzGD1t9xcdmJYFVB?si=119433d070eb4226>

*"I am drowning
There is no sign of land
You are coming down with me
Hand in unlovable hand
And I hope you die
I hope we both die"*

The year is 2015 and Eric, my now husband, and I just started dating. He is a music guy and self-professes to love sad music. We were in the car and Eric tells me he is going to play one of his favorite songs, and the song *No Children* by the Mountain Goats begins to play. I am immediately questioning, how can this song be your favorite song?? I am pretty sure that my mouth hung wide open for most of the song – shocked at the lyrics.

At first glance and listen this song may be alarming and you may be asking yourself, where is there hope in this?? NPR defines this song as, "a breakup song so dark it's funny, in whose jagged refrain you can't help but hear a little of yourself at your very worst." There is no lie that this song is catchy and you find yourself singing along. Eric and I have listened to this song many times since our first listen together. There even was a joke that it would be our first dance song at our wedding.

This song speaks to me about the ways we go through hardships in our lives. Working with college students you see the very high highs of life and the very low lows. The emotion and feelings that present themselves in those moments can feel overbearing. There is no doubt that we will face really hard seasons in our lives and they may feel like, "*there is no sign of land.*" We may go through seasons where we feel unlovable and that things are just dark all around us. Thankfully during this season of Lent we are able to acknowledge these thoughts and feelings through recognizing our mortality, but we are thankful to know that death does not have the final word. We can acknowledge that we show God our worst sometimes, but that is not what defines us. God sees us and offers us love, mercy, and grace even in our lives that may feel dysfunctional at times.

So friends, be willing to express how you are feeling just like Darnielle, the writer of this song, who writes about the dysfunction of a marriage and the soul-crushing yet liberating work of his divorce. God hears our thoughts and feelings even when we are frustrated, mad, upset, cynical. May we feel comforted that God sees us in every moment of our lives and yet still loves us. Through dysfunction we often find ourselves and I am hoping we see ourselves and each other a little more and more like God sees us. Through dysfunction we recognize our need for grace.