



Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love
(Romans 8:38-39)

by Jacqueline Laughlin

I live on a farm. It is quiet, bucolic, a rather peaceful existence that acts as a retreat and buffer from most of the challenges of urban life. It gives me a great deal of time to write, think, and pray. I have more uninterrupted time to be close to God here because I slow down and listen.

I spend a great deal of time with all manner of animals: cows, chickens, pigs, a dog, several cats and even a llama. They are a motley crew each of whom has their own personalities. They teach me so much about what it means to be human and the sacredness of all life. They don't exactly talk to me, but they each in their own way make their wishes known. I seem to be sensitive to such things. I am learning what it means to be a good steward of all creation.

It is a good life and I am grateful for this time and this place as it has afforded me a place to heal and grow stronger spiritually and physically, especially when I was ill and needed it most.

Now here is the part where I got stuck on stupid, especially when I don't get my way or things don't go the way I think they should....

About a year ago, just before it was time to leave for church in the city, we had a new calf born. It was an easy birth; the mom Phoebe, though it was her first birth, needed no assistance. Mother and baby were doing well in spite of a muddy field and limited shelter.

Her baby nursed well, but the decision was made, as is often the case with dairy cows, to separate mother and baby shortly after birth. This practice makes me absolutely insane, but I thought I would be prayed up enough to handle it. After all, it was a Sunday morning in Lent.

The calf was removed from the field to a dark stall in the barn by tractor—her mom watching in dismay. I rushed off to church to avoid an argument. I was sure by the time I returned mother and baby would be united and all would be well.

Well no ... nearly three weeks go by, and the separation continues. I kept feeling this event triggering my sense of a cross to bear. Calvary was finally well in sight right here on the farm!

No amount of advocacy, convincing or cajoling would change the sight of mother mooing at the fence while baby stumbled alone in the barn, hand fed with bottled milk from her mother several yards away. I had bad dreams about infants not nursed by their mother, immigrant children caged at borders separated from their parents. I have my own abandonment issues of being raised through infancy with my grandmother.

Anger and resentment toward caregivers who persisted with practices they didn't agree with and the general downfall of the human race and the agricultural system in America kept me agitated. I could see clearly all would be solved if mother and baby were reunited—if they would just listen to me.

Then, I remembered "Minding My purpose" [*Jackie, was this the Lent theme from last year? or another season*] which drove me deep to despair, love, and finally, yes: forgiveness. A true Lenten journey: my faith tested as only failure can.

I chanted day and night, I visited Mother and Baby. I was reminded so sweetly in scripture that love knows no distance and nothing ever separates us from Love.



Photos of Phoebe and separation day...