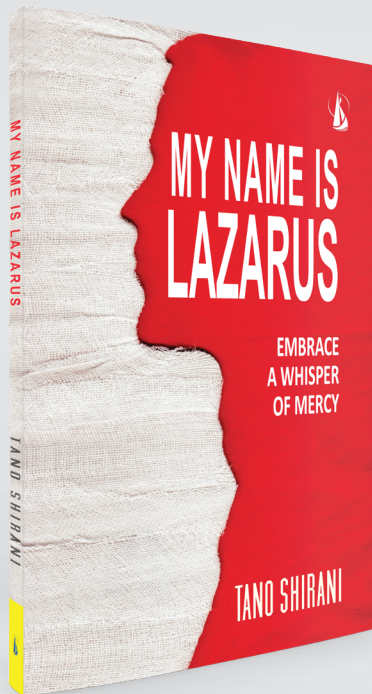




KANISIUS PUBLISHER



Tano Shirani

Novel

Bahasa Indonesia

208 pages

125 x 190 mm

All rights available

1016001025

978-979-21-4644-8

2018

My Name is Lazarus,

Embracing the Whisper of Benevolence

*The cords of death entangled me;
the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.*

*⁵ The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.*

*⁶ In my distress I called to the LORD;
I cried to my God for help.*

*From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came before him, into his ears.*

(Psalm 18:5-7 –Daily Worship) New International Version (NIV)

Lazarus, a name familiar among Catholic believers. The story is amazing. He became one of the people who received special gift from Jesus. Raised from the dead. That is, having experienced death, to be in the “waiting room” of another world. Lazarus is one of the most prominent figures in the New Testament Scriptures. His “returned” story from the realm of death has

been popular for centuries. In fact, the story is an inspiration for some people to produce other works, whether it’s fiction, filmography, or musical. Then, what about the story of Lazarus according to Tano Shirani? Tano Shirani is a writer with a biblical study background, who also likes to write the fruits of his thoughts in the form of stories. One of his writings is Lazarus. The writing

in this novel does illustrate and take the perspective of a Lazarus, someone who has been revived by Jesus. However, Tano managed to package this story very beautifully. As readers, we can be tricked as if we are not in the same position as Lazarus. In fact, we often are on one track with Lazarus, only can never fully aware.

Lazarus' novel which comes from the Gospel of John 11: 1-12: 11 is very intelligently peeled and unraveled in enough detail into eight chapters. The technique of taking a point of view, characterization, conflict, and also the solution is taken very carefully. Tano succeeded to bring this Holy story into a new form and meaning, which is more contemporary and truly touches the "heart" of the readers.

In the Gospel of John, it was narrated that a person named Lazarus was ill and approached the sacred

death. Apparently, the closeness of the relationship between Jesus and Lazarus and his two sisters, Maria and Martha, has brought extraordinary blessings to this family. The hope of this family is fairly large, when one family member is sick, of course they want Jesus to come and commit healing. However, the benefit of the blessing is only felt on the surface, when they still have everything in this world and forget the basic things as human beings. That's what happened when Lazarus became ill and eventually died.

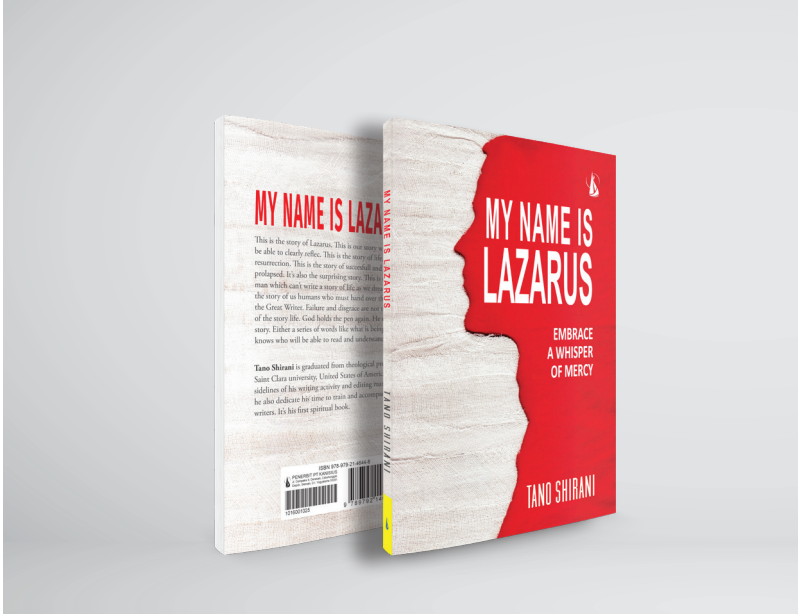
Here Tano positioned the role of Lazarus and Jesus as two friends who had known each other for a long time. As an illustration, if one of them had a misfortune, then the other would automatically come to help overcome it. Tano's wordplay makes the readers increasingly sure of the closeness of Lazarus and Jesus' relationship.

There is a strong tension. I heard Jesus say: "Are there twelve hours in a day? If people walk during the day, they don't stumble. He saw the light of the world ". Jesus is my best friend who is good at making parables. I'm used to that. Both of my sisters were captivated by Jesus' teachings because of his skill in telling stories with parables. Then I thought about it, it was really true. Anyone who walks during the day, when the atmosphere is bright, when the sun is fierce, will not need another light. That light is enough. They and the world around them have been covered and sheltered by that light.

The passage shows the closeness of Lazarus and Jesus, whom he has regarded as a friend. Another interesting thing is that there are Hebrew quotes with Indonesian

translations. Of course this cannot be separated from the expertise and competence of Tano Shirani in mixing words. The existence of the quotations in this paper is very enriching and makes the readers have closer imagination of the situation of Bethany, where Lazarus lives.

This story becomes even more interesting and challenging for the readers to immediately find the truth of Lazarus and Jesus' friendship closeness. Very skillfully, Tano actually brought the readers into the inner conflict of Lazarus' spirit. The "time" that Lazarus had used was to find the biggest reason, why Jesus did not come when He knew he was suffering. Why as a friend, Jesus ignored him. Readers are invited for a moment to feel a situation of disappointment. Disappointed in a friend, disappointed in a person who has been relied on as a helper in dark situations.



Lazarus' search paid off. The spirit of Lazarus who was traveling to various regions finally decided to trace the path where Jesus was when he laid helpless. Did Jesus, who had received the news about Lazarus' pain, really not do anything? The answer to the question was witnessed by Lazarus himself. He saw the expression of Jesus when he heard the news of Lazarus' illness, and also the actions of Jesus. Lazarus was increasingly disappointed for he saw Jesus as if

he didn't care about his situation, even until his death was 3 days long.

Tano cleverly reverses Lazarus' prejudices against Jesus using only a few key sentences from the Scriptures. Lazarus, who was preoccupied with "cursing" the attitude of Jesus' actions, was made silent, unable to say anything. Even though opening stones at the door of the tomb was not permitted because it was against the Jewish

tradition, Jesus did it. Jesus wanted to show how great his love was for his friend. What Jesus did, which was against the Jewish tradition, was indeed very serious. It was witnessed by Lazarus' own spirit, also witnessed and doubted by many of Lazarus' neighbors, even by Marta, his own sister.

The whole event was so astonishing. However, there are still other things that occur in the process. Before the stone was finally rolled off, before not even one person came forward, Marta, as usual as a very practical and strategic person, immediately reminded Jesus, "Lord, he has died for four days. He must be very smelly". Yes, what she said was really true. It's logical. Very reasonable. No special skills are needed to be able to know such things. Marta strongly believes in the resurrection.

The doubts of the people gathered around Jesus grew wilder when they heard Jesus asking to roll the stone off the tomb entrance, and calling "Lazarus, please come out". This voice of Jesus led to an extraordinary awareness and wonder. The residents, who saw Lazarus' figure appear from the grave, yielded various reactions and expressions. Similarly, that also happened to Lazarus who had joined his spirit and body. People were curious with what Lazarus would say to Jesus, after the disappointment and prejudice that was made when his spirit went around following Jesus.

The final part of the novel closes with an evocative statement, *Yes, death is real, and yes, resurrection is real. Sin is real, and repentance is also real. Pain is real, and healing is real. Grief is real, and joy is also real. Dark can indeed be very dark, but light can indeed be very bright. With Jesus. In Jesus.*

Through Jesus. Faith in new life becomes a new bond. New hope makes us able to see far beyond the limits of the senses and the sense of humanity.

This novel has a lot of highlights on the lives of Jews, especially their traditions and religious life. Like wrapping a special gift for a special person, Tano uses language and choice of words that are interesting and straightforward, thus implying the subject of this Jewish theme. Indeed, in some parts of the novel, quotations from the Scriptures are written, as a comparison and supporting storyline that is being told by Lazarus. Lazarus, as a Jewish figure, finally saw and examined his story from a different perspective. It does not merely see the point of view of his resurrection by Jesus, but looking at the struggles and problems actually faced by Lazarus more deeply and reflectively and also us as the present day “Lazarus-Lazarus”.

As a biblical-historical novel, although the biblical content is not very dominating, this novel has its own strength that is able to enchant the readers to immerse in his story. With a Scripture quote, Tano Shirani managed to produce a slick and interesting work to read. Its beauty is supported by research on Jewish and biblical traditions which further strengthens the historical nuances of the novel.

About the Author

Tano Shirani was graduated from theological program from Saint Clara university, United States of America. On the sidelines of his writing activity and editing manuscript, he also dedicate his time to train and accompany spiritual writers. It's his first spiritual book.



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