Blood Ties: A Father Dowling Mystery (Father Dowling Mysteries) by Ralph McInerny

Interesting Morality Play That Turns Into A Solid Murder Mystery

A young woman turns to Father Dowling for help in finding her birth parents only to discover the one person linking her to the past has been murdered Henry Dolans granddaughter, Martha Lynch, adopted twenty-three years earlier, wants to find her birth parents. Her adopted parents are frantic over the idea of losing her, so Henry seeks out Father Dowling for help.

My Personal Review:
Sheila and George Lynch were depressed because they could not have children of their own until they adopt a little girl after meeting the mother, Northwestern student Madeline, abandoned by her boyfriend. Madeline gives birth to Martha, who is raised by the Lynches with love. Over two decades later Martha works in the Loop as a paralegal at Foley, Farnum and Casey when Bernard Casey, the son of a senior partner, falls in love with her and asks her to marry him.

At the same time Martha considers the proposal, her biological father Nathaniel Fleck returns into Madeline’s life wanting to meet his daughter. Madeline fears her indiscretion will destroy her happy marriage. However, Fleck dies in a hit and run at the same time that Martha, over the trepidation of the loving Lynch couple, seeks her biological parents so her future blueblood in-laws will know exactly the color of her blood. She starts with Father Dowling and lawyer Amos Cadbury, who already knows the identity of the mother but feels trapped in a moral dilemma while Fleck’s death comes under suspicion.

The story line is at its best in the first half as several individuals struggle with what is right in areas that are so gray that no sound bite response will work. Father Dowling, Cadbury, Madeline, Lynches, and Nathaniel internalize what is morally the correct thing because what is right for one
person could harm another. When the homicide and subsequent
investigation takes over, BLOOD TIES remains a fine who-done-it, but
loses some of the strength of characters facing a complex dilemma. In his
letter X appearance, Father Dowling starts with an interesting morality play
that turns into a solid murder mystery.

Harriet Klausner

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