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Dear Parishioners,

I subscribe to Notre Dame Magazine and in the spring issue there was an article by Jerry Janicki called “I go to my bookshelf”. Janicki speaks about his life and the spiritual odyssey that it is: where he finds himself “peaceful and befuddled” at the same time.

He has questions concerning God, life and death; questions that ask: Why disease? Why suffering and human devastation?

He writes about his mother’s death—whose mind “had been destroyed by dementia”—and how he sat by her bedside:

Near the end, just before she became comatose, I called out to her. She opened her eyes and gave me a look of utter non-recognition that chilled me. The next day, she passed.

What with all the uncertainties, doubts and questions rising within, he continues to pray the psalms every morning at daybreak, in the back room with his cup of coffee. One morning, he woke up with a question “rattling around in my head”, as he put it. It’s the one Jesus poses to the disciples when he asks: “Who do you say that I am?” As he reached for his Bible to pray some psalms, it slipped from his hand and opened to that very passage in the Gospel of Matthew. And he writes:

In a spooky way, I had the idea I was being sent a message from beyond. The message was: ‘Who do you say that I am? Come on, make up your mind. Take a stand, say who I am.’

This is the timeless question all of us must face. And it is answered not so much in some neat, concise, theological manner as it is by the way we live, which is not all that concise and rarely neat, if lived within the struggle for authenticity and depth. We answer the question posed by Christ when we wake up to life and the everyday—the mystery Christ is—in spite of all that defies an answer like disease, suffering and human devastation.

For Janicki, a kind of answer forms within the woods behind his house: with its landscape and birdsong. It causes him to wonder. And I do believe that it is this capacity to wonder that opens us to God more than anything. We are made for wonder. Janicki writes:

I tell my children all of it is a miracle—the sky, the trees, the mountains, the birth of a new child, the colors of autumn, the fact that we can see these things, feel them, smell them, love them. I want to give praise and thanks for them.

During these days of autumn, may we learn to wonder.

Father Tim Clark

Pastor