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Reality: Problem or Mystery

This past week I had an unusual thing happen to me. I was driving on rte. 691 when a car in front of me hit a rock and sent it colliding with my windshield. A good size crack appeared; I was delighted. I called to have the windshield repaired and that company was coming to St. Thomas Seminary at 1 pm. on Monday to fix it. As it happened, just as they drove into the parking lot it became to pour rain. I had to make a new appointment for Saturday. Two days following this I was driving to Hartford from Rocky Hill on I-91 when a truck about 30 yards ahead of me lobs a rock the size of a golf ball on my windshield only one inch from the previous strike. I was startled at first and a bit agitated. However, soon after I was laughing and thanking God for his providential care. Had they windshield been fixed two days before I would have had to let the insurance company know it happened again within one week! Life can be mysterious!

How do we see life? Do we see it as a problem to be solved or a mystery to be lived? The answer a person gives to such questions will largely determine how they respond to life. Seeing life as a problem to be solved leads to a basic and sometimes oppressive need to control everything about life to create desired outcomes. Such a response is based on the notion that we can solve the problem of life, and the problems that come with life all the time. We desire routine and predictability and make little room for new things to appear in life that do not conform to our need for control—surprises need not apply. This is so for people and institutions. In such a response, the only gift that can be received from life is predictability and routine that conforms to me always wanting my way!

If we see life as a mystery to be lived then each moment of each day we remain open to the “new” things that appear in our world. Life becomes the revelation that all sits in the larger context of the Holy Mystery of Loving and Saving God. It is the apprehension that life is a miracle! Even our suffering, especially that which is inflicted upon us by our fellow human beings, is understood as endured in the presence of the abiding loving mystery of God as incarnated in Jesus Christ. Such an understanding leads to a life of gratitude and hope made possible by being open to the mystery of God.

Seeing life as a problem leads to anxiety; seeing life as mystery leads to gratitude and awe. This is reflected in the enthusiastic pronouncement of Christ about the insight possessed by the “little ones”. The “little ones” are those who understand that life is mystery; they are open to it and accept life as gift. They are open to graciousness of God and understand the giftedness of life. Such people as these live in the Spirit by loving God, others and themselves, and appreciating and protecting the goodness of creation. They are not so much interested in understanding the world as they are in living in and loving the mystery and working to transform the world with the knowledge they have of the world in the light of God’s incarnate love in Christ.

At one time in history it was thought that science and religion were opposite views of the world. Today that is changing. New scientific discoveries have summoned forth questions of a religious nature as exemplified by the recent book, “Thank God for Evolution”, by Protestant Minister Michael Dowd. More and more people are beginning to realize that we live in a mysterious and surprising universe.

The Lord’s blessing of the “little ones” is about how to see the world and respond to the world. When we accept the world as mystery and gift we are accepting the graciousness of God, the presence of God who chooses to walk with us through life. God’s Messiah comes to us, not in regal splendor, but in humility that bespeaks the human surrender to Divine Mystery that summons us to give expression to this mystery in our own lives of living, in what Paul tells us, in the Spirit by love, generosity, and sharing the gift of life with all by helping to shape a more just and peaceful world. No matter what life pitches at us we can endure it in a spirit of gratitude because we see life as sitting in the mystery of the all-loving and present companion, who in Jesus Christ promises and offers us peace.

How we see the world make a difference in how we live—problem or mystery; burden or grace?