

one

## ACCEPTANCE

*Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given  
understanding to the mind?*

Job 38:36

I ALWAYS THOUGHT OF MYSELF as a calm, well-adjusted, confident person, but that's a lie. Maybe not a lie, but it's not entirely true. When I saw my doctor write his diagnosis at the bottom of a page with my name at the top, I was confused. He wrote that so the insurance company would pay my claim, didn't he? Because that is not me, or not the real me. I'm a dad, a husband, and a priest. Did I really have depression and anxiety?

I won't call that time in my life (my late thirties and forties) my Dark Night, because I've read the poem with that title by the Spanish mystic John of the Cross. I like the poem and the dark nights. But I was taking medication for anxiety and depression. I don't want to think about it, but I was depressed and do suffer from anxiety. Many nights I would dream about having an anxiety attack only to wake with my heart pounding and accelerating, as if it were a race car surging off the starting line.

I'm in a better place now. I feel like the barred owl, with its face of wisdom, that called out last night. It's one of those dark-night friends. The owl's hoot reminds me that while the world is quiet, it's not asleep. While I rest, if my dreams let me, the creatures of the night live. We each have our part, our role to play in God's world. I don't understand it all, nor am I meant to. I have, however, learned that my brain can be sick or unwell, and through it all, I'm still loved by God. At times I still struggle to accept the illness and the severe difficulties it causes me.

### **Prayer**

*My Lord and my God*, you glittered the night sky with stars and filled the dark depths of the ocean with life. Assist me to accept the ways of the world and my place in it; help me understand my brain and its complexities; comfort me when my mind is agitated and anxious; and support me when I am weak. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

### **Prompt**

How would accepting your mental health struggles change you?

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