

Where Was God?

Yesterday, the Christian Brothers community was dealt an almost unimaginable tragedy, the loss of a precious and beloved member of our Christian Brothers community. When tragedies strike in our world— illness, natural disasters, or worst of all, the loss of a loved one— it is only natural to ask, “Where was God?”

In the face of such unfathomable loss, it is human nature to try to explain the unexplainable. We ask ourselves why God would allow such terrible things to happen in our world, in our nation, or in our school. We are tempted to offer explanations that often sound good on the surface, but ultimately fall short.

“God sends us suffering so that we can grow from it.”

“God is testing us.”

“This was all part of God’s plan.”

In response to a terrible tragedy in his own life, the Jesuit priest Richard Leonard wrote a powerful book about suffering called “Where the Hell is God?” In his book, Leonard writes that when terrible things happen, we often talk about being “dealt a bad hand.” He says we have to be very careful with the metaphor of a card game in which we are dealt bad cards. He says that when we use this metaphor, we must be careful who we imagine is dealing the cards. We must never imagine God as the dealer, handing out good cards to some and bad cards to others. Rather, he says, “life is the dealer of the hand . . . God is on our side [of the table]. God is on our side in every sense of that phrase, accompanying us in the game.” He

is with us. . .there to love us, care for us, and accompany us when we are faced with that bad hand.

When we lose people in our world, God is not “taking” them from us. In his book, Fr. Leonard says, “[God] is all about life, not death, construction, not destruction, healing, not pain. There is not a single page in the New Testament where we can read about Jesus taking anything away from anyone. No one went to him with one bad leg and had to be carried away because Jesus took his other leg off for good measure.” God only gives, he doesn’t take.

So where does this leave us? It leaves back at our original question, “Where was God?” I am here to tell you that I saw God yesterday. I saw God at Christian Brothers, right in the middle of unimaginable tragedy. I saw God in chapel, as friends and teammates hugged one another, cried together, and held one another up. I saw God in the coaches, staff members, and community members who were there to provide a shoulder to cry on. I saw God on the main lawn as hundreds of our fellow falcons gathered, many of whom, I am certain, didn’t even know Jaden. What they knew was that their friends were suffering, and so they showed up and kept a silent vigil as a sign of solidarity. In the midst of this terrible tragedy, I have never been prouder to be a falcon.

God was on the CB campus yesterday. I know it as deeply as I know anything. As I stood in the chapel and looked out at the crowd gathering on the main lawn, I overheard Coach Jermaine summarize it best. Through tears, as he looked at students silently keeping watch on the main lawn, coach simply said, “that right there is CB.”