

Bonnie Abadie, *Believing While Grieving: A Journey to Find Blessing in Brokenness* (Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, 2019), 49 pp.

This visually stunning collection of poems, paintings, and photographs gives voice to the author's personal journey as well as to the universal shared journey of grief. The book began as a series of journaled reflections and watercolors created by Abadie following the deaths, in rapid succession, of her parents and husband. She first shared these with her spiritual director and close friends, who in turn encouraged her to make them available to a wider audience, and the result truly is "a journey to find blessing in brokenness."

In her introduction, Abadie notes that she had taught courses on death and dying and on Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's stages of grief, but as she experienced grief herself she came to understand that the movement between stages is neither sequential nor chronologically predictable. The layout of her reflections and artwork follows her own progression, there is a beginning and an end, but the journey is filled with surprises and discovery.

The first poem, "Frightened," opens with an expression of raw surprise: "Frozen face, saucer sized eyeballs staring in the mirror" (p. 2) and moves on to catalog the many fears and losses she can only begin to name. Anger comes later but is often reserved for well-meaning acquaintances who encourage her to move on: "Duplicitous living is not my style, yet I can find / no safe place to just be broken for a while" ("Struggle," p. 20).

Mostly, though, these poems are an expression of Christian faith, and even the bleakest end with a word of hope: "I have named every tear you've cried . . . / Be assured, I am always near!" ("Solitude," p. 16). Abadie's final poems, including "Begin Again," "Cicada Symphony," and "Be Triumphant," lead us through the depths of grief to her own emerging glimpses of healing, wholeness, and tentative new joy.

Above all, this collection is remarkable for Abadie's unwavering witness to Christ's promises of the resurrection and his abiding eternal presence. There is sorrow here, but it rests on a foundation of trust. This is a book to share and to savor, written and illustrated in the language of the heart. She has the gift of beautifully shaping human words to give voice to what we have somehow always known, focused at its very center on God's peace and love.

Believing While Grieving is not a textbook about grief, nor is it a how-to manual on surviving. It is a collection of signposts in the wilderness, a reassurance to all of us weary travelers that we are not the first to embark on this unwanted journey and that we are never alone. Trust in Christ's promises brings hope and awakens us to the possibilities of what is being born in us, even now, in our own journeys of grief.

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