

Reflections from Fr. Dennis Gallagher, Provincial of the Assumptionists North American Province

Autumn in New England has two distinct phases. The first half of the season tops the popularity charts with its show of color, cooler temperatures and crisp apples. For many, the second half of the season is less winning, with steely gray skies, trees stripped bare, and dread for what is to come.

For a good part of my life, this was pretty much my take on fall, as the brightness of October gave way to the chill of November's shorter and darker days. A palpable sadness settled into me. I wanted to hibernate. Drawing close to someone for warmth and comfort was not an option, so I was left to saying, in the words of that great philosopher, Bill Parcells, "it is what it is."

Then, somewhere along the line, things began to change. It was not a question of bucking myself up, putting on my big boy pants and getting on with it. It had much more to do with opening my eyes, alas, to the stark beauty of bare-branched trees and widening horizons. The fallen leaves resulted in a line of sight that extended far beyond the over-ripeness of the late summer and early fall. No longer blocked by foliage, sunlight flooded through the windows of our houses, a kind of defiance of November's purported grayness.

Making peace with November in New England is not trying to make something out of nothing. It is, rather, to come to recognize another face of nature, more rough-hewn but no less beautiful in its own way than any of the other seasons. May God be praised.