



To be lonely or not to be... It's our choice!



REFLECTIONS FROM FR. ROSS

I recently came upon the following article in a monthly Christian newsletter:

Loneliness is a serious problem for out 10 percent of the population the United States at any given time. One psychologist called it a “unique clinical problem.” It is a powerful emotional state that can be identified, understood, and overcome. Gary Collins has called it one of the “most universal sources of human suffering” and Paul Tournier observed that “loneliness is the most devastating malady of this age.” Les Carter observed: “At the root of virtually every counseling situation we eventually uncover a problem of loneliness.” Psalm 25:16 says, “Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.” Psalm 102:7 notes, “I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop.”

Some experts suggest that loneliness is at epidemic levels today. The amazing feature about loneliness in our high-tech, information age is that a large number of lonely people are not alone. They are surrounded by people and are still lonely. Loneliness is linked to such things as suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, shyness, delinquency, immorality in women, and high-risk behavior in men, plus a number of other symptoms.

What does it mean to feel lonely? A lonely person typically feels out of touch, misunderstood, rejected, unwanted, unworthy, unneeded, and either insulated or isolated, or both. Albert Einstein once said, “it is a strange thing to be so universal ly known and yet be so lonely.” Statistics indicate that the loneliest people in our society are apt to be: low income people, single teenage mothers, alcoholics, college students, high school seniors (some estimates as high as 30% of all high school seniors), divorced adults, and the elderly.

So many people are often out of touch because they have insulated themselves in the virtual world of the Internet or the fantasy world of television. There is evidence to suggest that heavy television viewing distorts a person's concept of reality. Loneliness may occur during significant developmental transitions in our lives or due to low self-esteem. Many lonely people are

not motivated to reach out. They are convinced the pain of loneliness is less than would be the pain of rejection situations can contribute to the state of loneliness. But perhaps the greatest loneliness of all is the spiritual loneliness of feeling out of touch with God. There are some practical things that people can do to combat loneliness:

- ✧ The most powerful antidote is to know Christ in an intimate and real relationship, along with real and intimate human relationships.
- ✧ Also helpful is earning to develop various personal skills and growing in the ability to look differently and less personally or emotionally at one's personal issues.
- ✧ Being involved in people's lives in healthy ways.
- ✧ Learning to accept and even appreciate one's self, based on one's place in God's family can have an enormous influence on feelings of loneliness.

God has promised never to leave His children. When any of us choose to believe the truth, we will find the motivation to reach beyond the walls we may have erected around ourselves. Psalm 68:6 says, “God makes a home for the lonely.” When you believe God and look for His involvement in life, you will certainly find Him. When you do, loneliness is at least a step behind you.

The above article addresses an issue that I deal with on regular basis. Many, many people are looking for a connection to/with God and to/with others. It is important to remember that we need to be connected both to God and others. Jesus' whole preaching was centered around the importance of living out our faith in community.

I guess it's obvious that the most ideal and practical place to live this out is in our homes—these days I think the jargon is that it is a no-brainer. If it is so obvious, why is it that we don't do such a good job of it? The second most ideal and practical place to live this out is in our Faith Community. Essentially what Jesus had in mind was to bring people together so that there would be an authentic experience (not just feeling) of belonging—to make a lived reality the truth that we are connected in and through Jesus. May we continue on that road of welcoming and accepting one another.