

The Peril of Loneliness.
We are lonely when we build walls instead of bridges.

What would you say is the most common problem facing people today? According to Mother Teresa, the most terrible disease sweeping our world today is not leprosy, aids or even cancer. But rather: "The problem of loneliness – the devastating feeling of not being wanted or needed. The feeling that no one really cares."

I believe that God never meant for his "Crown of Creation" to be lonely. He showed his concern by saying, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). We were created social beings, capable of sustaining loving and congenial relationships with both God and our fellow men and women

C.S. Lewis was convinced that, "Fellowship with God is the destination for which human beings are actually created and to fall short of this destiny is to fall short of full humanity." Without God we are left as orphans in the universe.

We need to make a distinction between loneliness and solitude. Loneliness is essentially a negative experience, while solitude can be positive, creative and renewing. We all need to take time to draw apart from the noise and hurry of life, to pray, to listen, to meditate. In my own experience there have been times when I felt very close to God in some quiet place of solitude.

Loneliness has always plagued humanity but because of modern technology and rapid urbanization human relationships are becoming more and more impersonal. Loneliness is a very real pain, which gets through to all of us in vastly different ways and situations. No age bracket is immune from its perils. The loneliest person is often found in the middle of a crowd.

Recently I have been reading the account of four, very gifted men, who once classed themselves as atheists but are now firm believers. They found their atheistic beliefs were leading them down a path of despair, narcissism and hedonism with no future hope. They had discovered the bankruptcy, the pointlessness of living in a random universe without God. There is a depth in the human heart where we cannot communicate to one another. God alone can enter that depth; He alone can fill it. There is no substitute.

I recognize that there are no glib or simple answers to the problem of loneliness. Ideally, the church should be one of the most promising places where loving care and fellowship are extended. For over 50 years I have visited a great number of people in hospitals nursing homes and other places of human need and I can testify that their faith

in God has brought them peace and assurance. In times of loneliness they have found comfort and hope through the many promises of God's word.

I remember one dear lady who spend a large portion of her life in a wheelchair. She said, "I spent many a day alone, but never a lonely day. I have the Lord as my day by day companion."