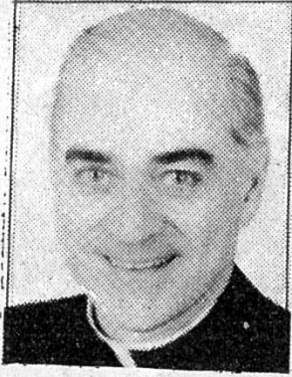


COPING WITH LONELINESS

"In your service to others keep to the humble works because they are the works nobody else will do. Even if you go to a lonely person and sit and listen or clean the house, it is beautiful. It is never too small for God. Fidelity in small acts will help us to grow in love." (Mother Teresa of Calcutta)



There is a lonely person somewhere who needs you. Loneliness is a form of emotional pain. We've all felt it at one time or another. It has reached epidemic proportions in the modern world because of changes in family life patterns. To give your time, your presence, to someone in need is a precious gift. If you've ever

express the fear or discomfort you feel; let it out. Ventilate. If you visit a lonely person, let them do the same.

Then, simply accept it. You have a perfect right to feel the discomfort, the emptiness. After all, you're human. It's the price you pay for being unique. Loneliness may be distressing at times, but it's not dangerous. In fact it's quite normal. Accepting it and helping another to

been lonely you know what it means.

Sometimes listening is all you need to do; a thoughtful phone call, or a short visit can be of immense help to a lonely person.

"I think the central thing about loneliness," says psychologist Marsha M. Linehan, "is accepting the fact that you are lonely and you're going to be lonely again. Loneliness means being alone when you don't want to be. It's painful but not a great catastrophe, and life is not going to stop. Once you accept all this, you can start to cope with loneliness."

Helping someone else cope is a lot easier if you know how to cope with your own loneliness. Here are a few ideas that might help:

First, admit that you are lonely from time to time. Talk about it with a friend;

accept it is more than half the battle.

When you know how to live with your own loneliness you can more easily reach out to someone else, and listen.

Lent is really not so much a time for slimming down as it is a time for giving up. Sacrifice is giving up a legitimate good (e.g., your time, your freedom) for the sake of love, something beautiful for God.