

## FROM THE PASTOR

*Dear Brothers and Sisters*



"Are you lonesome tonight...?" So sang Elvis Presley, as some of us may remember! The answer to his question is yes –all of us have experienced loneliness.

The terrible pains of loneliness afflict everyone from time to time. No one escapes. Rich or poor, educated or simple, healthy or sick, believer or atheist, saint or sinner.

Loneliness is part of our anthropology, our human make up. Adam felt alone in the Garden of Eden. God created Adam, and each of us, with what Saint John Paul II called 'Original Loneliness.' The experience of being alone was a preparation, a disposition, which Adam had, so that he could find the answer to his loneliness in God alone.

For some people, the experience of loneliness has somehow pushed them to new heights: new heights of creativity and self-expression in art, music, literature and study.

But it has driven others to gambling, drink, drugs, gluttony and self-harm.

Loneliness has moved some people to seek and find loving encounters in deep friendship and service; or true sexual fulfillment in marriage and family life.

But it has driven others to fornication, pornography or perversion.

For some, loneliness has been the path that led them to a deeper relationship with God, and to a life of contemplative, even mystical prayer.

It has brought others to end their life.

Loneliness has been the experience that has brought some people to real maturity and their true identity; it has led them to become a real man, or real woman, fully alive.

It has broken or destroyed others, leading to depression, physical pain or mental breakdown.

Even people who are happily married, or have an exciting social life, or who live in a community, can still be afflicted by loneliness.

And there are some very sensitive people, even those surrounded by loving family and caring friends, who can feel lonely nearly all the time.

People will be lonely, but they will not admit it. They regard it as a personal failure. They think loneliness is a weakness, something to be hidden.

These people may put on a brave face, a wide smile. Yet they suffer behind closed doors. They cry alone. Sometimes they cry all night.

Our experience, in fact, is rooted in the lonely make-up of the human heart. It is a loneliness that can never be taken away completely by any human love.

For those whose lives are blighted by loneliness, or those who live in the fear of some future loneliness, through bereavement, or sickness, or old age, the Church today celebrates a word of immense hope.

This Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup> is the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. This feast does not commemorate a departure. No! It celebrates a presence and a promise: I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF TIME.

Most of us need to hear this promise personally and often. It is a promise that can inject a massive dose of optimism and courage into our veins!

This promise can help us to live at peace with our loneliness and restlessness. And to accept the limitations and defects of the people we love, not demanding from them what they cannot give us.

Celebrate the Ascension with us. Hear the promise. Believe the word. Receive new hope. Have peace. Be grateful.

*Happy Easter, Fr. Sean*