



Sunday 15th May 2022

My dear brothers and sisters,

Greetings to you and your families. I hope that you are well in mind body, soul and spirit.

This week, there has been much attention and credence given to Mental Health Awareness and this year's theme of loneliness.

It is such a vast subject and one that resonates with many of us, least of all Jesus Christ himself when he was in the desert and carrying his cross.

We often think that it is our elders that are lonely or loneliness only happens to old people. Well, nothing can be further from the truth! Loneliness happens to each and every one of us regardless of our age and we will all experience this. There is no escape. In fact, we are seeing more and more young people enduring the effects of loneliness and isolation. It is an issue for all of us because we will encounter this ourselves or know of someone who is suffering at some point in our lives.

This week, I wanted to share a short story with you. However, I did not come across anything that quite 'fitted'. This in itself spoke volumes to me because what loneliness means to me and what it means to you can be very different.

Have you heard the phrase 'you can be lonely in a crowd'? I didn't know that until someone explained that to me. We can perceive that people are happy, enjoying life by what they post on social media, the clothes they wear, the cars they drive, the jobs they have etc but sometimes the reality of what we think and what they have couldn't be further from the truth.

The turmoil and anguish that many in society now feel is stark. Covid was a decisive factor for many and they continue to feel the after effects of this. People have lost loved ones, friends, jobs, their social circle but many have also lost the zest for life.

Every week, people confide in me what is in their hearts and the truth is so many of us are alone and feel isolated even though we have families and friends. These are real feelings, pangs that come and go but are forever present.

We live in a world that is governed by gadgets, phones and social media yet we are losing the real essence of communication with each other by speaking face to face, meeting one another, checking on each other. These are simple things in life that we can all do to make someone's day. The saying a 'friend in need is a friend indeed' is so true.

I don't have a magic wand to eliminate this growing social concern but I do know that we as a community have a collective and social responsibility to ensure that we look after each other.

As you step out this week, take a little time to look more closely at those around you. Be a friend and extend that olive branch to someone in need. It is the simple things in life that make a big difference. Never stop reaching out to others.

I wish you a blessed and peaceful week ahead and we especially pray for our young children of the parish as they embark on their First Confession and Holy Communion journey over the next few weeks.

May God continue to bless and guide you all.

Yours affectionately,

Rev Fr Nicholas Nwanzi