

Homily for the 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday, b cycle October 3,2021

Several years ago, I read “Days of Grace”, the autobiography of tennis player and African-American Arthur Ashe. Not only was Ashe an accomplished athlete, but he was also an international diplomat and respected civil rights activist of great renown. At the time of his premature death, he was forty-nine years old His passing was nothing less than tragic. He became gravely ill following a transfusion of tainted blood. The cause of death was the AIDS virus, then a scourge killing scores of people over three decades ago.

In one chapter of the book, Ashe writes of his wedding day. As a result of a tennis injury—bone spurs in his heels--, he was on crutches. Those crutches later came to symbolize his marriage to his wife, Jeanne, a photo journalist. She was his crutch. He leaned on her for support as he battled a fearsome disease. He understood that he was not independent as he once thought, but utterly dependent on another person for his care and emotional support.

He needed others.

In today’s first reading from the Book of Genesis, God observes, “It’s not Good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:15). It is noteworthy that the story of man’s salvation begins with a community, and not the individual. So, too, does Catholic teaching. It begins with the family.

God wants us to enjoy the benefits of community and friendship. Especially today people need others, friends, children and communities, to assuage loneliness.

Adam is aware of his loneliness. It is through his awareness of being alone that he can appreciate the benefit of communion with others.

Loneliness is a painful, universal phenomenon. Only recently I read a study conducted in France that revealed that more than half a million French seniors live in a state of “social death’ and almost never interact with others.

The late nun, Mother Teresa, often spoke of the spiritual poverty of the Western world. She said that it is much greater than the physical poverty of people in Calcutta. (India). People in the West suffer such terrible loneliness and emptiness.

On this “Respect Life Sunday”, we must identify many of the social ills that contribute to our loneliness and the rise in mental health issues. One need only consider abortion, infanticide, death-dealing drugs, physician assisted suicide, the sexual exploitation of children, pornography, divorce, co-habitation outside of marriage the virtual collapse of family life and the distraction of the internet.

It is not good for us to be alone.

Let us also bemoan the loss of faith in our society. As a family, the household of God, we gather for worship on the Day of the Lord, Sunday. Today, fewer than twenty percent of the baptized are in church for the celebration of mass. They have made the decision to practice their faith alone, if they practice it at all.

We all have a hand in battling these disturbing trends in our modern Western world. We must defend the faith at all costs, regardless of the consequences.

We must proclaim the message loud and clear: “It is not good for the human being to be alone”.