

Solidarity in pain

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There is no denying that in today's world a culture of loneliness and isolation plagues individuals of every age, race and socioeconomic status. Although the church provides a sacred community that may help combat this loneliness, even the most devout believers have, at one time or another, questioned how or even if God is present in their suffering.

Throughout all shapes and spaces in ministry—hospital chaplaincy, mission work, parish, youth, and campus ministries—the words of Psalm 22 provide both solace and empathy to those who ask God, “Why have you forsaken me?”

The psalmist knows the pain of loneliness, yet still acknowledges a God who “took me from the womb” and “kept me safe on my mother's breast.” The psalmist still prays to a God that he or she is not sure is listening.

Sometimes the best words of scripture to offer the lonely and suffering are not verses of cheer or joy. Sometimes the best words we can hear are the words of one who knows what it is to question faith. In the deepest pain there is solidarity, and in the deepest prayers—especially those of grief—there is a hope that outlasts all sorrow. “Do not be far from me” the psalmist cries, “do not be far from me.”