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From loneliness to love

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.B.

Some of my most treasured moments are ones I've spent alone. And some of my saddest moments have also been when I was alone. I was alone when I prayed to feel God with me, and did. It was a precious time.

On the other hand, I was alone one New Year's Eve. Others could have invited me but intentionally didn't. Being excluded felt lonely. Another time, I was in a crowded room feeling estranged from those around me. It's lonely when no one seems to understand what you're going through. But being alone has also been a gift when I've felt close to and loved by God.

For me, the remedy for loneliness is feeling this love. God is the very source and essence of love. "God is love," says the Bible (I John 4:8). And being infinite Love, God cares for each one of us, excluding no one.

People don't have to earn God's approval or affection. It isn't a reward. It's an eternal relationship. Love is a gift God gives impartially without any reservation. Like an all-you-care-to-eat buffet, God's love is provided in abundance to all who come. It never runs out. There's an unlimited supply. There's no withholding. No favoritism. Each one who comes is plentifully blessed.

The 23rd Psalm sings of God as the source of blessing: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (verse 5). And the founder of this newspaper, Mary Baker Eddy, offered a spiritual insight into this verse by naming the Lord Love: "[LOVE] prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: [LOVE] anointeth my head with oil; my cup runneth over" ("Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," pg. 578).

These promises apply to moments of feeling alone. Right in the presence of loneliness, divine Love prepares a buffet of blessings for you. Even in the

presence of enemies such as neglect or misunderstanding, Love prepares a way of goodness for you. When no one is there to encourage, Love approves of you, anoints your head. God loves you with an overflowing love that never ceases.

God does this directly. God doesn't require other people to provide your blessing. Others may join you at this table of divine Love. But security and peace of mind come directly from God.

On that lonely New Year's Eve, I spent the evening in prayer and spiritual study to feel the love of God. And that's when I realized that God's love was like a buffet. But I had to come with my own plate and not expect someone else to fill it for me. From that day forward, if I wanted to be with other people, I invited them. I stopped sitting alone praying for someone to meet my longing for company. The result has been an abundance of friends and activities.

I also stopped feeling alone in a crowd when I began to think more about other individuals' spiritual nature. I saw that my loneliness had actually been accentuated by disregarding the good qualities of other people. I began to pray to see the good in those around me. As I began to appreciate the spiritual nature of others, my loneliness faded.

What had been separating me from other people? Was it their attitude or mine? Actually, neither. It was really a basic ignorance - a wrong conception about the loving nature of God and of His/Her creation. It's this ignorance that influences people to act unkindly. The "enemy" wasn't a person, but this wrong concept. That was a tremendous relief. I could do something about feeling separate. I could love more. Loving is reflecting divine Love. Putting love into action inevitably opens our heart to feel the embrace of God's love for us. We can always love more.

Now I cherish every moment alone. It's a precious time to feel united with God. Instead of wishing I were with someone else, I appreciate being with God, the source of love. When I want to be with others, I trust God to provide a banquet of opportunities. And I'm never disappointed.