

Lent 2010



Lenten Meditation # 8 - Good Friday

LENTEN GARDENS **"HOW NEAR WAS GOD?"**

In the Garden of Eden, God seemed to talk with Adam as easily as a helpful neighbor might talk over a backyard fence (except that there were no fences). In the Garden of Gethsemane the night before Jesus' crucifixion, the scene was very different. Peace and expectation had given way to anxiety and sorrow. Yet, Jesus knelt there and talked with God about what lay ahead. Golgotha, or Calvary, where three crosses would later stand, was no garden; it was a desolate place, where a feeling of death was in the air. Yet, even while dying on the cross, Jesus talked with God.

One of the hardest things about suffering is the feeling of aloneness. To be sure, no one else can feel our pain, but if someone is near, the suffering is shared and we feel comforted. In Gethsemane, Jesus wanted that comfort and sharing, but his disciples fell asleep. They did not understand what he was about to face. On the cross, Jesus felt alone and cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But at the end he said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

These garden experiences remind us that God is never apart from us, whatever our position or need may be. We may feel alone, and our problems are very real, but God is there to help us face them creatively. Sometimes God is not the "deliverer" we hope for, but God is always near as "comforter", "strengthened" and eventual "restorer" of new life.

How near is God amidst the problems that all of us face from day to day? In our times of sorrow or perplexity or danger, do we look for God to be near? Sometimes our feelings of aloneness come because we do not realize how near God is. It helps to pray, even if we do not know what to pray for. Reach out to God; complain to God; ask help from God! Our specific words are not as important as the very act of reaching out. In remarkable ways we may discover that God was there with us all the time.



