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2008

Sudden Death

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Sudden Death

In some sports, when the contests have not resulted in a victory for either team, a "sudden death" mode of play is invoked in order to bring about a winner, and as a consequence, a loser. When someone close to us dies suddenly, there would appear to be only one "winner" – the one who is now with God – and the rest of us left to grieve over our loss.

All of us experience loss, and most of it is sudden, at least in our experience. Even if we anticipate a change in a love relationship, in a job, or residence, we still might have to deal with some grief and some loss. If we made the decision for the change, perhaps the pain is less. When someone leaves us, or our job is terminated, or our home is destroyed, the pain is intense, whether or not we knew ahead of time the loss that might be ours.

Where is God, in our times of loss? What do we expect of God when we are grieving? The answers we give to these and similar questions will make the difference between our own living or, in some way, dying.

We can come through our deepest hurts more readily when we designate God's location as being within us, and sharing our present experience rather than thinking that God is somewhere above and beyond us. Where is God? Many people look directly at a symbol of Christ on the cross as a means of contacting the love of God who knows our suffering from the inside. God turns directly towards us in our hurts, and looks at us directly with a compassion and understanding that places love ahead of loss. We might be a long time in our process of grieving, but we are not alone. And we will not be left alone, at any time, no matter how long our heart aches.

Our expectations of God are best related to previous experiences rather than to the many ways we could think about what God might or might not do or permit. If we have ever run to our mother or father with the pain of a loss, our healing began in the assurance – probably not stated as such – that we could continue to live, even without the person or thing that would no longer be ours. When we turn to God, we can expect to find new meaning and purpose in the midst of our grieving. God is and will always be immediately present to us, enabling us to complete our healing process according to our unique set of qualities.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest." (Mt. 11:28) Jesus spoke those words before his own death. They are addressed to us, now.