

Suicide

When it comes to suicide there isn't much one can offer by way of consolation, even faith consolation, at such a moment, when everyone is in shock and the pain is so raw. Few things can so devastate us as the suicide of a loved one, especially of one's own child. There is the horrific shock of losing a loved one so suddenly which, just of itself, can bring us to our knees; but, with suicide, there are other soul-wrenching feelings too, such as confusion, guilt, second-guessing, and religious anxiety. Where did we fail this person? What might we still have done? What should we have noticed? What was this person's standing with God?

Firstly, suicide is a disease and the most misunderstood of all sicknesses. It takes a person out of life against his / her will, and is the emotional equivalent of cancer, a stroke, or a heart attack. Secondly, we, those left behind, need not spend undue energy second-guessing as to how we might have failed that person, what we should have noticed, and what we might still have done to prevent the suicide. Suicide is an illness and, as with any sickness, we can love someone and still not be able to save that person from death. God loved this person too and, like us, could not, this side of eternity, do anything either. Finally, we shouldn't worry too much about how God meets this person on the other side. God's love, unlike ours, can go through locked doors and touch what will not allow itself to be touched by us.

Is this making light of suicide? Hardly. Anyone who has ever dealt with either the victim of a suicide before his / her death, or with those grieving that death afterwards, knows that it is impossible to make light of it. There is no pain like the one suicide inflicts. Nobody who is healthy wants to die, and nobody who is healthy wants to burden his / her loved ones with this kind of pain. And that's the point - this is only done when someone isn't healthy. The fact that medication can often prevent suicide says a lot.

Suicide is an illness not a sin. Nobody just calmly decides to commit suicide and burden his / her loved ones with that death, anymore than anyone calmly decides to die of cancer and cause pain. The victim of suicide (in all but rare cases) is a trapped person, caught up in a fiery, private chaos that has its roots both in his / her emotions and in his / her bio-chemistry. Suicide is a desperate attempt to end unendurable pain, akin to one throwing oneself through a window because one's clothing is on fire.

Many of us have known victims of suicide, and we know too that in almost every case that person was not full of ego, pride, haughtiness, and the desire to hurt someone. Generally it's the opposite. The victim has problems precisely because he / she is wounded, raw, and too-bruised to have the necessary resiliency needed to deal with life. Those of us who have lost loved ones to suicide know that the problem is not one of strength, but of weakness - the person is too-bruised to be touched.

Too often it is precisely the meek who seem to lose the battle, at least in this world. However, we shouldn't worry about how God meets our loved ones who have fallen victim

to suicide. God, as Jesus assures us, has a special affection for those of us who are too-bruised and wounded to be touched. Jesus assures us too that God's love can go through locked doors and into broken places, free up what is paralysed, and help that which can no longer help itself. God is not blocked when we are. God can reach through.

Our loved ones who have fallen victim to suicide are now inside of God's embrace, enjoying a freedom they could never quite enjoy here, and being healed through a touch that they could never quite accept from us.
