

Suicide - The pain of the ones left behind

Each year I write a column on suicide and try to highlight three things.

First, suicide is a illness, not something freely chosen. A person who dies by suicide, certainly in most cases, dies against his or her own will.

Suicide is death by illness, not something someone wills.

Second, those left behind should not spend undue time and energy second-guessing: "What might I have done?" "Where did I fail?" "If only I had responded and reached out when I had the chance!" Suicide is the emotional equivalent of cancer, a heart attack, or a stroke, and all the care and reaching-out in the world cannot, at times, save a loved one from death by these. That's true too for suicide.

Finally, we should not spend too much time either worrying about the eternal salvation of those who die by suicide. God's love, healing, understanding, and forgiveness reach into those places where we cannot. God can descend into hell and breathe out peace even there.

Moreover, as we know, most suicide victims are over-sensitive, wounded persons, too-bruised to be touched. God's touch is gentler than our own.


With that being said, I would like, this year, to share the feelings and reflections of a woman who, last year, lost her husband to suicide. The victim of suicide may be at peace in God's arms, but those left behind generally take a long, long time to make peace with this kind of death.

Here are her words:

My husband abandoned me and his daughters about a year ago.

Without any warning signs, he left us to fend for ourselves. Yes, he had seemed stressed out and unhappy, but always insisted that everything was fine. One day he didn't come home from work. The next day his body

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By Father Ronald Rolheiser

was found. He had killed himself.

Despite being surrounded by loving family and friends, this reality was mine alone. The pain was excruciating, a pain that no one could share. The loneliness was beyond belief. A black weight settled into my being, a weight that suffocates and crushes. I seemed to live in an alternative reality, that of hell. I prayed to God incessantly for help. Help, help, help. I needed help. My husband had betrayed me massively. My daughters were fatherless. Words cannot convey the pain, despair, suffering I felt. I hurt badly. Anger seethed out of me. I was enveloped in a brutal black place. My being was crushed, my heart shattered irrevocably, my soul in dire need. Send me help. I need help. Please Lord send me help.

'Rest in God,' a friend advised in a sympathy card. I was desperate to do this. I prayed and prayed. Yet no breath of peace fell on me as I cried each night for help. Yes, friends brought meals over, they did yard work, they tried to be there for me. But no one could share my pain, my living hell. I tried to rest in God, yet the loneliness was too much for me.

I turned from God, the pain of his abandonment was too great. I stopped going to church. I stopped praying. I stopped caring. I considered casual sex,

drugs, and drinking. Whatever. I was broken and damaged and didn't really care anymore. I was still in an alternative reality, still in hell, I didn't care.

I started feeling better. Subconsciously I was still desperate, on my knees, begging God for solace. Help, help, help. This prayer, this simple prayer, this desperate prayer, wove itself into my being. The times I let myself feel it I would break down in utter despair.

I made it through the first year, but barely. On the one-year anniversary, I relived each excruciating minute, the horror of viewing his body, the unbelievable pain of comforting my wailing daughters whilst desperately needing comfort myself. I went to the chapel where the vigil had been held and sobbed myself sick. I relived my hatred, anger, guilt, abandonment, blackness, despair. My anger slowly dissipated into sadness. Deep deep sadness. A sadness that continues to squeeze my heart, my soul, my being.

My husband was not created to die by his own hand. He was created in God's image, to become the person God meant him to be.

Instead he murdered himself. This is so brutally wrong and skewed. I cannot wrap my mind around it.

My priest told me that sometimes God leads us to what we fear most, to show us we have nothing to fear. It's true that I don't fear death anymore. I saw clearly when I saw my husband's dead body that his spirit was no longer there. I know without a doubt that he is at peace. I just don't understand how I will ever come to my peace, at least in this world. I feel permanently disabled and damaged and sad.

I cry as I breathe deeply and try to trust. Guide me, guard me, O Lord my God.

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Our struggle to understand suicide

Every year I write a column on suicide because, among all forms of death, it's still the one we struggle with the most. How can suicide happen? What makes a person take his or her own life?

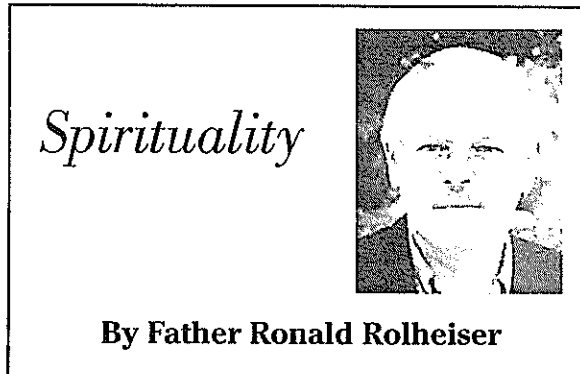
Suicide, no doubt, is the most misunderstood of all deaths and leaves behind a residue of questions, guilt, anger, second-guessing, and anxiety which, at least initially, is almost impossible to digest. Even though we know better, we're still haunted by the feeling that suicide is the ultimate act of despair, a deed that somehow puts one outside the family of humanity, the mercy of God, and (in the past) the church's burial grounds.

When someone close to us commits suicide we feel both pain and shame. That's why suicides are often not reported publicly. An obituary is more likely to say that this person "died suddenly," without specifying the cause of death. This reticence to admit how our loved one died speaks deeply about both the pain and the shame that we are left with after the suicide of a loved one. To lose a loved one to suicide is also disorienting.

What needs to be said about suicide? A number of things need to be re-iterated over and over again:

First, that suicide, at least in most cases, is a sickness, a disease, a terminal illness that takes a person out of life, as does any terminal illness, against his or her will. In essence, suicide is death through emotional cancer, emotional heart attack, emotional stroke. That's why it's apt to say that someone is "a victim of suicide." Suicide is a desperate, if misguided, attempt to end unendurable pain at any cost, akin to throwing oneself through a window and falling to one's death because one's clothing is on fire. Suicide is an illness, not a sin.

Next, those left behind when a loved one commits suicide should not unduly second-guess themselves, anxiously examining over and over again what they might have done differently, why they



weren't more present, or how they somehow failed the one who committed suicide.

Part of the anatomy of the disease is precisely the pathology of distancing oneself from one's loved ones so that they cannot be present to the illness. When a loved one commits suicide we can't help but ask ourselves: "If only I had been there! Why was I absent just on that morning?" But we weren't there precisely because the person committing suicide did not want us to be there and picked the moment, the venue, and the means precisely with that in mind.

Besides, we're human beings, not God. People die from accidents and illnesses every day and all the love and attentiveness in the world sometimes cannot prevent someone we love from dying. Suicide is a sickness and, like cancer, sometimes cannot be cured by any amount of love and care. Knowing this isn't an excuse to rationalize our failures, but it can give us some consolation in knowing that it wasn't our neglect or inattentiveness on a given day that led someone we love to suicide.

Finally, we should not have undue worry and anxiety over the eternal fate of our loved ones who commit suicide. Why not?

First, in most cases, as we know, suicide victims have cancerous problems precisely because they are over-sensitive, wounded, too-bruised to be touched, and too raw to have the normal resiliency needed to deal with life. Their problem is not one of pride and strength, but rather of shame and weakness. What drives them to do this act is not the arrogance of a Hitler, but the weakness of an illness.

That's why we can make a distinction between "falling victim to suicide" and "killing oneself." The former is done out of illness, the latter is done out of pride. On the surface they might look the same, but there's an infinite moral distance between being too bruised to continue to touch life and being too arrogant to continue to take one's place within it.

And God, more than anyone else, understands this. God's understanding and compassion are much deeper than ours and God's hands are infinitely gentler than our own. If we, in our imperfect love and limited understanding, have some grasp of this, shouldn't we be trusting that God, who is perfect love and understanding, is up to the task and that our loved ones are safe in God's hands and God's understanding?

Any faith that connects itself to a God worth believing in doesn't have undue anxiety as to what will happen when God, finally, face to face, meets a bruised, gentle, over-sensitive, wounded, ill, struggling soul. Indeed, we have many scriptural references as to what happens, namely, God, who can descend into any hell we can create, goes straight through our locked doors, enters into the hell of our paranoia, illness, and fear, and gently breathes out peace.

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Saint or a sheep thief?

The descent into Hell

Several years ago, a young woman I knew attempted suicide. She was 23 years old and away from home. Her frightened, concerned family rushed to her side. They brought her home, got her the best medical and psychiatric attention available, and, most importantly, rallied around her, trying in every way to bring her out of suicidal depression.

They weren't successful. Two months later, she killed herself. She had descended into a place into which no human love, medicine, or psychiatry could penetrate, a private hell beyond human reach.

What hope do we have in a situation like this?

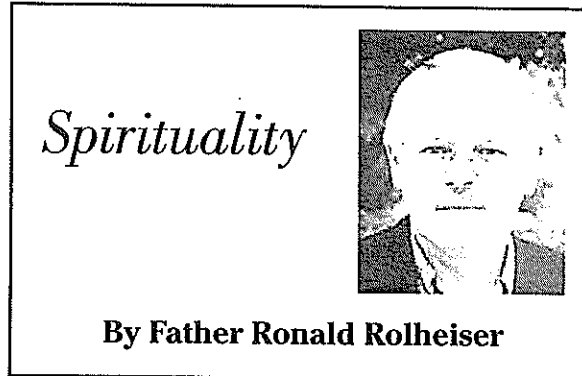
Humanly there isn't any. Outside of faith, she is lost to us and we are helpless to reach her. But, inside of faith, there is hope, surprising hope.

We have a doctrine within our faith which, to my mind, is singularly the most consoling belief in all religion, namely, the belief that Christ can descend into hell.

One version of our creed tells us that Jesus "descended into hell?" What does this mean?

We are not always sure. There are various traditions as to its meaning: In one version, perhaps the most common, the idea is that the sin of Adam and Eve closed the gates of heaven, and they remained sealed until the death of Jesus. Jesus' death opened them and Jesus, himself, in the time between his death and resurrection, descended into hell (Sheol, the Underworld) where all the souls who had died since the time of Adam somehow rested. He took them all to heaven. His "descending into hell," in this version of things, refers to his going into the underworld after his death to rescue those souls.

But there is another understanding. It suggests that Jesus' descent into hell refers especially to the manner of his death, to the depth of chaos and darkness he had to endure there, and to how the depth of love, trust, and forgiveness he revealed inside that darkness manifests a love that can pen-



etrate into any hell that can be created. That's rather abstract to be sure, so allow me an illustration:

In St. Paul's Cathedral in London, England, there is a famous painting by Holman Hunt that has inspired numerous, less worthy, imitations. It is a painting which depicts Jesus outside a door with lantern, and the picture suggests that we, who are inside that door, must open the door to allow Jesus in, otherwise he will always remain outside. In some of the imitations of that painting, the artists have taken things further, namely, they have placed a knob on the inside of the door, but none on the outside, suggesting that Jesus cannot enter our lives unless we open the door to let him in.

I remember as a child, seeing this image on a holy card, and being haunted by it, fearing precisely that one day I might be too hurt, depressed, or otherwise paralysed to open that door.

But, powerful as this image is, it is belied by the gospels. How?

John, in his gospel, gives us this picture: On the day Jesus rose from the dead, he finds his disciples huddled in fear inside a locked room. Jesus, unlike the imitation versions of Holman Hunt's great paint-

ing, does not stand outside the door and knock, waiting for the disciples to come and open the door. He goes right through the locked doors, stands inside their huddled circle of fear, and breathes out peace to them. He isn't helpless to enter when they are too frightened, depressed, and wounded to open the door for him. He can descend into their hell by going through the doors they have locked out of fear.

That is also true for the various private hells into which we sometimes descend. We can reach a point in our lives where others can no longer reach into our pain and where we are too wounded, frightened, and paralysed to open the door to let anyone in. Human care can no longer reach us. But Jesus can enter those locked doors, can descend into our hell.

I am sure that when the young woman, whose suicide I mention, woke up on the other side, she found Jesus standing inside her fear and sickness, breathing out peace, love, and forgiveness, just as he did in the darkness and chaos that he descended into in his death. I am sure too that she, sensitive young woman that she was, found in his ordering, forgiving breath a peace that was, for all kinds of reasons, denied her in this life.

Our belief that Jesus did, and can, "descend into hell" is the single most consoling doctrine within all religion. It gives us hope when, humanly, there isn't any. Sometimes, because of illness and hurt, someone we love can descend into a place where we, no matter our love and effort, can no longer reach. But not all is lost: Jesus can descend into that hell and, even there, breathe out a peace that again orders the chaos.

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Suicide—the most misunderstood of all deaths

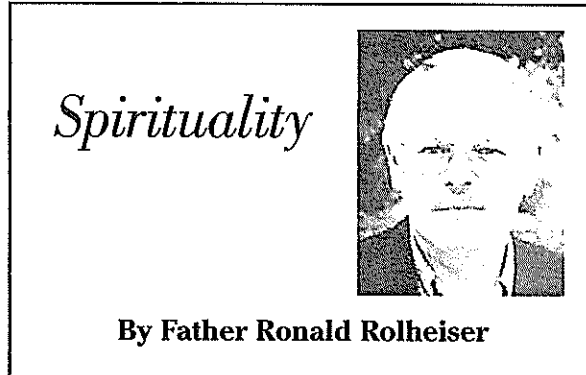
Death is always painful, but its pains are compounded considerably if its cause is suicide. When a suicide occurs, we aren't just left with the loss of a person, we're also left with a legacy of anger, second-guessing, and fearful anxiety.

So each year I write a column on suicide, hoping that it might help produce more understanding around the issue and, in a small way perhaps, offer some consolation to those who have lost a loved one to this dreadful disease. Essentially, I say the same things each year because they need to be said. As Margaret Atwood once put it, some things need to be said and said and said again, until they don't need to be said any more. That's true of suicide.

What's needs to be said, and said again, about it? First of all that it's a disease and perhaps the most misunderstood of all diseases.

We tend to think that if a death is self-inflicted, it is voluntary in a way that death through physical illness or accident is not. For most suicides, this isn't true. A person who falls victim to suicide dies, as the does the victim of a terminal illness or fatal accident, not by his or her own choice. When people die from heart attacks, strokes, cancer, AIDS, and accidents, they die against their will. The same is true of suicide, except that in the case of suicide the breakdown is emotional rather than physical—an emotional stroke, an emotional cancer, a breakdown of the emotional immune-system, an emotional fatality.

This is not an analogy. The two kinds of heart attacks, strokes, cancers, breakdowns of the immune-system, and fatal accidents, are identical in that, in neither case, is the person leaving this world on the basis of a voluntary decision of his or her own will. In both cases, he or she is taken out of life against his or her own will. That's why we speak of someone as a "victim" of suicide.



Given this fact, we should not worry unduly about the eternal salvation of a suicide victim, believing (as we used to) that suicide is always an act of ultimate despair. God is infinitely more understanding than we are and God's hands are infinitely safer and more gentle than our own. Imagine a loving mother having just given birth, welcoming her child onto her breast for the first time. That, I believe, is the best image we have available to understand how a suicide victim (most often an overly sensitive soul) is received into the next life.

Again, this isn't an analogy. God is infinitely more understanding, loving, and motherly than any mother on earth. We need not worry about the fate of anyone, no matter the cause of death, who exits this world honest, over-sensitive, gentle, over-wrought, and emotionally-crushed. God's understanding and compassion exceed our own.

Knowing all of this however, doesn't necessarily take away our pain (and anger) at losing someone to suicide. Faith and understanding aren't meant to take our pain away but to give us hope, vision, and support as we walk within it.

Finally, we should not unduly second-guess when

we lose a loved one to suicide: "What might I have done? Where did I let this person down? If only I had been there? What if ...?" It can be too easy to be haunted with the thought: "If only I'd been there at the right time." Rarely would this have made a difference. Indeed, most of the time, we weren't there for the exact reason that the person who fell victim to this disease did not want us to be there. He or she picked the moment, the spot, and the means precisely so that we wouldn't be there. Perhaps it's more accurate to say that suicide is a disease that picks its victim precisely in such a way so as to exclude others and their attentiveness. This should not be an excuse for insensitivity, especially towards those suffering from dangerous depression, but it should be a healthy check against false guilt and fruitless second-guessing.

We're human beings, not God. People die of illness and accidents all the time and all the love and attentiveness in the world often cannot prevent a loved one from dying. Suicide is an sickness there are some sicknesses that all the care and love in the world cannot cure.

A proper human and faith response to suicide should not be horror, fear for the victim's eternal salvation, or guilty second-guessing about how we failed this person. Suicide is indeed a horrible way to die, but we must understand it (at least in most cases) as a sickness, a disease, an illness, a tragic breakdown within the emotional immune-system. And then we must trust, in God's goodness, God's understanding, God's power to descend into hell, and God's power to redeem all things, even death, even death by suicide.

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Life seems to come together in the mid-thirties

Our misconceptions about suicide

Margaret Atwood once wrote that sometimes things need to be said, and said, and said, until they don't need to be said any more. Each year I write a column on suicide because, given the misconceptions about it, some things need to be said over and over again.

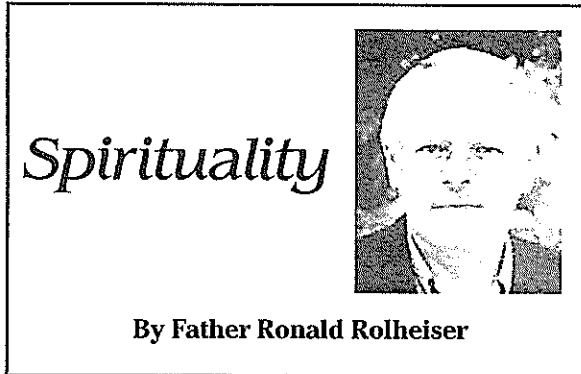
What are our misconceptions about suicide? What must be re-iterated over and over again.

First, that suicide is not an act of despair. We are, too slowly, emerging from a mindset that understands suicide as the ultimate act of despair—culpable, irrevocable, and unforgivable. To commit suicide, it is too commonly believed, puts one under the judgement once pronounced on Judas Iscariot: "Better to not have been born." Until recently, victims of suicide were often not even buried in church cemeteries.

What we didn't understand when we thought these things is that the propensity for suicide is, in most cases, an illness, pure and simple. We are made up of body and soul, either can snap. We can die of cancer, high blood pressure, heart attacks, aneurysms. These are physical sicknesses.

But we can suffer these too in the soul, not just the body. There are malignancies and aneurysms too of the heart, mortal wounds from which the soul cannot recover. In most cases, suicide, like any terminal illness, takes a person out of life against his or her will. The death is not freely chosen, but is an illness, far from an act of free will. In most instances, suicide is a desperate attempt to end unendurable pain, much like a woman who throws herself through a window because her clothing has caught fire. That's a tragedy, not an act of despair.

If this is true, and it is, than we should also give up the notion that suicide puts a person outside the mercy of God. God's mercy is equal even to suicide. After the resurrection, we see how Christ, more than once, goes through locked doors and



breathes forgiveness, love, and peace into hearts that are unable to open up because of fear and hurt. God's mercy and peace can go through walls where we can't. As we all know, this side of heaven, sometimes all the love, stretched-out hands, and professional help in the world can no longer reach through to a heart paralysed by fear and illness.

But, where we stand helpless, God's compassion can still reach through. God's love can descend into hell itself (as we state in our creed) and breathe peace and reconciliation right into wound, anger, and fear. God's hands are gentler than ours, God's compassion is wider than ours, and God's understanding infinitely surpasses our own. Our wounded loved ones who fall victim to suicide are safe in God's hands, safer by far than they are in the judgements that issue from our own limited understanding. God is not stymied by locked doors as we are.

When suicide victims wake on the other side, they are met by a gentle Christ who stands right inside of their huddled fear and says: "Peace be with you!" As we see in the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, God can go through locked doors, breathe out peace in places where we cannot get in, and write straight with even the most

crooked of lines.

Finally, too, there is a misunderstanding about suicide that expresses itself in second-guessing: If only I had done more! If only I had been more attentive this could have been prevented.

Rarely is this the case. Most of the time, we weren't there when our loved one departed for the very reason that this person didn't want us to be there. He or she picked the time and place precisely with our absence in mind. Suicide is a disease that picks its victim precisely in such a way so as to exclude others and their attentiveness. That's part of the anatomy of the disease.

This, of course, may never be an excuse for insensitivity to those around us who are suffering from depression, but it's a healthy check against false guilt and anxious second-guessing. Many of us have stood at the bedside of someone who is dying and experienced a frustrating helplessness because there was nothing we could do to prevent our loved one from dying. That person died, despite our attentiveness, prayers, and efforts to be helpful. So too, at least generally, with those who die of suicide. Our love, attentiveness, and presence could not stop them from dying—despite our will and effort to the contrary.

The Christian response to suicide should not be horror, fear for the person's eternal salvation, and anxious self-examination about we did or didn't do. Suicide is indeed a horrible way to die, but we must understand it for what it is, a sickness, and stop being anxious about both that person's eternal salvation and our less-than-perfect response to his or her illness.

God redeems everything and, in the end, all manner of being will be well, even beyond suicide.

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More's being proclaimed the goodness of the Lord

Our misunderstandings about suicide


Each year I write an article on suicide because so many people have to live with the pain of losing a loved one in this way. When someone close to us falls victim to suicide we live with a pain that includes a lot of confusion (“Why?”), guilt (“What might we still have done? Why didn’t we notice sooner?”), misunderstanding (“This is the ultimate form of despair”) and, if we are believers, considerable religious anxiety as well (“How does God treat such a person? What’s to be his or her eternal destiny?”)

What needs to be said about suicide: First of all, that it’s a disease, something that in most cases takes a person out of life against his or her will, the emotional equivalent of cancer, a stroke, or a heart attack. Second, we, the loved ones who remain, should not spend undue time and 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 a purely physical disease, we can love someone and still not be able to save them from physical death. God too loved this person and, like us, could not interfere with his or her freedom. Finally, we shouldn’t worry too much about how God meets a suicide victim on the other side of God’s love, unlike ours, goes through locked doors, descends into hell, and breathes out peace where we can’t. Most victims of suicide will awake on the other side to find Christ standing inside their locked doors, inside the heart of their chaos, breathing out peace and gently saying: “Peace be with you!”

But there are always a number of objections: “You are making light of suicide! Suicide is the ultimate act of the despair and must always be named as such! Wasn’t it G.K. Chesterton himself who said that, by killing yourself, you insult every flower on earth?” What’s to be said about these comments?

They’re correct, when suicide is indeed a despairing act within which one kills oneself. But in most

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suicides. I suspect, this is not the case because there is huge distinction between “falling victim to suicide” and “killing oneself”. They’re not the same thing.

In “suicide,” a person, through illness of whatever sort, is taken out of life against his or her will. Hence we use the term “victim”—“a victim of suicide.” Many of us have known “victims of suicide” and we know that in almost every case that person was someone who was the antithesis of the egoist, the narcissist, the over-proud, hardened, unbending person who refuses, through pride, to take his or her place in the humble and broken scheme of things. Usually it’s the opposite.

The “victim of suicide” has cancerous problems precisely because he or she is too-sensitive, too-wounded, too-raw, and too-bruised to possess the necessary callousness needed to absorb life’s many blows. I remember a comment I once heard at a funeral. We had just buried a young man who, suffering from clinical depression, had committed suicide. The priest had preached badly, hinting that this suicide was somehow the man’s own fault and that suicide was always the ultimate act of despair. At the reception afterwards a neighbor of the suicide victim

came up and expressed his displeasure at the priest’s remarks: “There a lot of people in this world who should kill themselves, but they never will! But this man is the last person who should have killed himself, he was the most sensitive person I’ve ever met!” Too true.

“Killing yourself” is something different. It’s how some of the Hitlers pass out of this life. Hitler, in fact, did kill himself. He wasn’t a victim of suicide. In such a case, the person is not too-sensitive, too self-effacing, and too-bruised to touch others and be touched. The opposite is true. The person is too proud to accept his or her place in a world that, at the end of the day, demands humility of everyone.

There is an infinite distance between an act done out of weakness and one done out of strength, even though on the surface they might look the same. Likewise there is an absolute distinction between being too bruised to continue to touch life and being too proud to continue to take one’s place within it, though these too might look the same on the outside. There is all the difference in the world between falling “victim to suicide” and “killing oneself.” Only the latter makes a moral statement, insults the flowers, and challenges the mercy of God.

Our loved ones who have fallen victim to suicide are now joyous and whole, inside of God’s embrace, where, as our faith assures us, all is well and every manner of being is well.

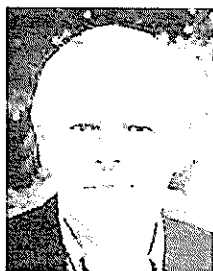
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Suicide: Too bruised to be touched

By Father Ronald Rolheiser

A few days ago, I was asked to visit a family who had, just that day, lost their 19 year-old son to suicide. There isn't much one can offer by way of consolation, even faith consolation, at a moment like this, 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, confusion, guilt, second-guessing, religious anxiety. Where did we fail this person? What might we still have done? What should we have noticed? What is this person's state with God?

What needs to be said about all of this: First of all, that suicide is a disease and the most misunderstood of all sicknesses. It takes a person out of life against his or her will, the emotional equivalent of cancer, a stroke, or a heart attack. Second, 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 or her death or with those grieving that death afterwards knows that it is impossible to make light of it. There is no hell and 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 or 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 should tell us something.

Suicide is an illness not a sin. Nobody just calmly decides to commit suicide and burden his or her loved ones with that death any more 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 or her emotions and in his or 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 cancerous problems precisely because he or 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.

I remember a comment I over-heard at a funeral for a suicide victim. The priest had preached badly, hinting that this suicide was somehow the man's own fault and that suicide was always the ultimate act of despair. At the reception afterwards a neighbor of the victim expressed his displeasure at the priest's homily: "There are a lot of people in this world who should kill themselves," he lamented bitterly, "but those kind never do! This man is the last person who should have killed himself because he was one of the most sensitive people I've ever met!" A book could be written on that statement. Too often it is precisely the meek who seem to lose the battle, at least in this world.

Finally, I submit that we shouldn't worry too much 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 and free up what's paralysed and help that which can no longer help itself. God is not blocked when we are. God can reach through.

And so 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.

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