

Fact of FAITH

Suicide

by Larry Rice

For many centuries, if you asked people what was one unforgivable sin, the answer might have been: suicide. Analyzed with cold logic, that answer is understandable. After all, how could someone seek forgiveness and reconciliation if they were already dead?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has some helpful things to say about suicide. It notes that we are the stewards of the gift of life; it's not something we can dispose of at will. Furthermore, it is contrary to the "just love of self;" and breaks the ties of love and solidarity between family members. It can also cause grave scandal, which is leading others into sin by one's example.

But the *Catechism* also notes that the conditions under which people often take their own lives can diminish their moral responsibility for the act. Psychological disturbance, anguish, grave fear, suffering, and torture can mitigate the responsibility of taking one's own life.

Finally, the *Catechism* states clearly (2283) that we should not despair of the eternal salvation of those

who have taken their own lives, but trust them to God's unfathomable mercy. In the Church's revised *Order of Christian Funerals*, we pray:

God, lover of souls,
you hold dear what you have made,
and spare all things, because they are yours.
Look gently on your servant N.,
and by the blood of your cross
forgive his/her sins and failings.

Remember the faith of those who mourn,
and satisfy their longing for that day
when all will be made new again
in Christ our risen Lord,
Who lives and reigns with you forever.

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