

Cycle B 10th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sunday June 10th, 2018

Today I would like to talk with you about a serious life issue that culture and society have been nearly silent about. As a result individuals and families are deeply suffering in silence. Silence will not bring an end to this painful and tragic epidemic. The Catholic Church and all people of good will, have a duty to proclaim the sanctity of all human life. The beginning of the healing process can only occur, when the Light of Jesus Christ with His Mercy and Truth are shared. This is how we can give hope to those who are suffering in silence.

This past week two well-known celebrities: clothing designer Kate Spade and Chef Anthony Bourdain committed suicide. They are the most recent among celebrities to take their own life. Even with fame and fortune they were suffering in silence. According to the National Institute for Mental Health in 2016 45,000 people lost their lives to suicide in the United States. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people between the ages of 10 to 34 years old, and the fourth leading cause of death for people ages 35 to 54 years old.

What is the cause of this tragic loss of human life? Many times it is the result of mental health disorders such as:

: Depression

: Bipolar disorder

: Schizophrenia

: Anxiety disorders and

: Personality disorders

Some of the risk factors include:

: Previous suicide attempts

: Substance abuse

: Incarceration

: Family history of suicide

: Poor job security or low levels of job satisfaction

: History of being abused or witnessing continuous abuse

: being diagnosed with a serious medical condition, such as cancer or HIV

: being socially isolated or a victim of bullying

: being exposed to suicidal behavior

These mental health diagnosis and risk factors are likely not a complete list, however they reveal the depth of the problem, and help us to begin the conversation, and remember this for these difficult conversations, **“The Lord our God will NEVER EVER give a sign that it is okay to commit suicide, and that a lot of people love them”** The first step in the conversation is listening to those who are hurting. And YES, this hard!

The first step for the person who is hurting is admitting that you need help. And, YES this is hard too! We do live in a culture that says we have to be tough and we are not to be vulnerable. Asking for help is a sign of courage and humility.

If it helps the conversation to get started; I found myself in the midst of significant depression in the spring of 2012. I told a brother priest that I was in serious trouble and needed help. He listened and helped me to get to the places I needed to be for healing. The journey toward healing took 2 years. And now I have the skills to recognize when I need to ask for help to be renewed and refreshed.

One thing I remember in particular about that dark time was DESPAIR. It seemed like there was no hope, no way out. There are two kinds of despair, which I just learned this week listening to Catholic Radio. One type of despair is spiritual in nature and one is psychological nature. To describe these two types of despair would take quite some time and we must keep in mind each individual person is unique. Suffice to say however, is that despairing in general is a common trick of the devil. The devil is full of tricks. That is why we call him the great deceiver. We know from the Book of Genesis that the devil lied to Adam and Eve. He still lies to us today. Thanks be to God that we have Jesus Christ and His Truth and healing mercy. We have the Scriptures, the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, Reconciliation, and the Anointing of the Sick. Speaking of the Anointing of the Sick we are generous with this sacrament not only for physical sickness, but also

for mental and spiritual sickness, because we believe in the healing of mind, body and spirit. We also have the gift of people working in the mental health sciences, and people of good will who care about all of God's people.

In concluding this difficult conversation today I would like to make 3 final points. One: The Lord our God will NEVER EVER give a sign that it is okay to commit suicide. Secondly: Each and every person is loved by someone: Mom, Dad, siblings, children and friends. And, the Lord is deeply in love with each one of us and has created each one of us for some definite purpose.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/suicide-and-suicidal-behavior>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>

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