

Dear Padre,

We knew a beloved priest whose death was self-inflicted. What is the Church's stance on suicide?

I offer my heartfelt sympathy to you and the faith community for this tragic loss. "We are stewards, not owners, of the life God has entrusted to us. It is not ours to dispose of" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2280). Those who take their own life to end personal suffering assume a decision-making that belongs to God alone. However, the Church also acknowledges that "grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide" (CCC 2282).

At the same time, the Church relies on the compassion of God, who fully knows the intensity of suffering that triggers suicide. Therefore, the Church pastorally states: "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives" (CCC 2283).

How, then, does the Church specifically pray for those who've committed suicide? Generally they're not deprived of full burial rites in the Church, which consoles the living and commends all of the dead "to God's merciful love and pleads for the forgiveness of their sins" (*Order of Christian Funerals*, 6). Nor are they deprived of burial in a Catholic cemetery—a sacred place that helps bring peace to those confronted by the sudden death of a suicide.

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HILARY SUSAN OSMANI / PIXELS



A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*

The increase in the rates of suicide in your cities, as well as bullying and various kinds of neediness, are creating new forms of alienation....I ask you to pay special attention to [the young] and their needs. Try to create spaces...of generous and selfless love...to everyone, and not only to those who have "made it."

—MEETING WITH BISHOPS, TOKYO, NOVEMBER 23, 2019

Calendar

Monday

SEPTEMBER 14
The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Nm 21:4b–9
Phil 2:6–11
Jn 3:13–17

Tuesday

SEPTEMBER 15
Our Lady of Sorrows
1 Cor 12:12–14, 27–31a
Jn 19:25–27 or
Lk 2:33–35

Wednesday

SEPTEMBER 16
Sts. Cornelius, Pope, and Cyprian, Bishop, Martyrs
1 Cor 12:31—13:13
Lk 7:31–35

Thursday

SEPTEMBER 17
Weekday
1 Cor 15:1–11
Lk 7:36–50

Friday

SEPTEMBER 18
Weekday
1 Cor 15:12–20
Lk 8:1–3

Saturday

SEPTEMBER 19
Weekday
1 Cor 15:35–37, 42–49
Lk 8:4–15

Sunday

SEPTEMBER 20
Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Is 55:6–9
Phil 1:20c–24, 27a
Mt 20:1–16a