

## THOUGHTS WHEN DEALING WITH A SUICIDE

When something so tragic as a suicide confronts us, we ask: Why do bad things happen - why does such anxiety afflict good people? Let's take that burden off each other's shoulders right now and surrender the need for answers that we will probably never have and answers that will never satisfy us. Let's surrender to what we do know – that you are a loving community with many friends – that people of good will love each other and are there to reach out to each other whenever they need it. Let's also surrender to the gift of faith that tells us that God is good – that life is stronger than death - that Jesus (who is the Resurrection and the life) is kind and merciful ... slow to anger and very forgiving. And let no one forget that it is **only God** who understands completely what is in the mind and heart of a person.

Friends, it is on a day like this that we need to remember that God is near ... God is with us – and that we have faith in someone greater than ourselves. Human words seem so inadequate and they betray us. But, with faith, we have a new vocabulary that is more healing and more powerful than our own. In faith we hear words like "God loves everyone unconditionally - and nothing can separate us from the love of God" - and Jesus is in heaven to prepare a place for you us.

We are the family of God ... the family of the flesh which perishes and the family of the spirit which, by God's love, lives forever.

Today, we are reminded of the frailty of humanity ... that in us all, there are limits and there are weaknesses that are beyond our control; a vulnerability, a pain, a despair, a demon ... that is somehow is completely shielded from all the human kindness that we can give.

For many of us - it is true - that sometimes we don't hear the voice of love - though its tender sound is all around us. Sometimes we don't realize the arms of love that enfold us – arms that are really caring arms. Sometimes, we don't grasp that the songs that are sung - are truly sung for us and that - in our in strength and in our weakness, in our labor and in our rest, in our goodness and in our evil, we are accepted, and valued, and treasured, and welcomed and loved for who we are, just as we are - without condition or qualification or merit or any other measure of judgment.

Today, we bear witness together to the truth of this loved one is no longer with us in the flesh but is alive - alive in our hearts - alive and living in the presence of God forever. And we can say this because we believe that our loved one was God's creation and all that God creates is good – that this loved one was a child of God ... during their years on earth.

Here's a very special prayer. It's prayer that is especially dear to our brothers and sisters who struggle and suffer with the strong feelings of despair and anxiety. Most know the beginning of the prayer ... but there is another piece that is less known and it is that piece that makes Reinhold Niebuhr's *Serenity Prayer* ... truly serene!

**God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.**

**Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as God did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that God will make all things right if I surrender to God's Will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with God  
Forever in the next. Amen.**

*– Author, Reinhold Niebuhr*