

- - -

Why Army Suicides?

Don't be upset by wild tales of suicides in the Army. There are some, yes, but remember, too (1) the reports are greatly exaggerated; they probably would have occurred in civilian life; there will probably be more when the next depression hits us; (2) there is no reason for a Catholic to commit suicide; (3) there is even less for a Notre Dame man, provided he gets the full N. D. life, and isn't just exposed to it - or opposed to it.

Briefly the suicides can't "take it" or don't consider life worth "taking it", and they are right if there is no God, no heaven or hell, no reward for "taking it" for God. Don't blame it on the boys. Blame it on modern life (which stresses ease and comfort), modern education, modern irreligion, modern philosophy and pride. So many of our modern evils can be blamed on pride, the feeling of self-sufficiency and independence of God - until a crash comes.

One case received considerable attention in the East this summer. Take A.B., an air cadet, 26 years old, son of an eminent professor at a very prominent Eastern university. Described by an engineer as "the most brilliant boy I have ever known", he committed suicide after leaving gloomy messages saying in part:

"Just a note to let you know I am letting you down. Down deep the temptation has been great. I wish that the power to keep going was there. There is no substitute for strength and vitality. It would have happened sooner except for a sheltered life. The weak do not have the right to get in the way of the strong."

Many of these chaps from a worldly point of view had everything to live for. Their way no doubt had been made excessively easy, "sheltered" as one describes it, and when they had to leave those protecting, shielding influences and had to give and take in the army (and the world is often far worse than the army), had to receive sharp commands, whether they liked them or not, were forced to associate with all kinds of people whether they liked them or not, they failed to adapt themselves to their surroundings and to defeats and humiliations in some things. They thought thereupon they were total failures, too weak to cope with the hard world.

In brief, they took themselves too seriously, were too introspective, too much bothered by little defeats, humiliations, frustrations. Most of these unfortunate reactions are an outgrowth of pride which doesn't always mean being snobbish, going about with head and nose up. Pride can work itself out in a fear of failure, a lack of confidence.

And they had no one, nothing to build up confidence and faith in themselves, in their worth, in the worthwhileness of suffering and bearing a cross. Of course, they didn't have God or Heaven or Christ. These were ripped out by modern education, no doubt.

Christ didn't promise a heaven or earth, did He? He was honest with us: "Take up your cross daily and come follow me" whether that is in school, later in the army, in domestic or professional life. He was not only honest, He was also wise, when He said, "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls".

Does following Christ and being humble mean being a weak, colorless character? Was Christ? Show us anyone ever more humble! Show us anyone ever more strong!

.

Pray to Christ for these boys: pray to Christ for yourself also, first in gratitude, then for His humility and His strength to follow Him - and thus to be a leader for Him.

PRAYERS: (Deceased) Joe Reiter (former watchman). Ill. father of Tom Herlihy (How), operation. 8 special intentions.