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LIFE IS WORTH GIVING

HEALING TROUBLED HEARTS IS MARVELOUS WORK OF MERCY

by Fr. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.

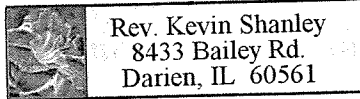
A wise therapist once said that the most difficult wounds to heal are the ones we cannot see. Many people go through life suffering all types of wounds to their spirit, their mind and their soul. They are sometimes too afraid to seek help. They often fear being rebuffed by others who lack compassion and understanding, or their wounds may be too serious for a normal spiritual, mental, or physical healing.

But as writer Lyn Holley Doucet points out in a recent book, "Our wounds can keep us running from ourselves, from healing, and from God's call. Negative voices within and without us drown out the simple sweet voice of Spirit."

And people often put off healing in the hope that the wound will heal by itself, or that putting off seeking help until the future will be of some better advantage. Or simply that the wound will somehow go away. Such approaches tend to make matter worse for most people, and can actually make the healing process prolonged.

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Lyn Holly Doucet, an experienced retreat director active in the ministry of spiritual direction, has written out in her book a fifteen-week program that should aid many in taking a break from a harried life, to overcome a hurt that may well have lasted unhealed for many years, and then to embrace a life that brings about renewal and rejoicing. It is a book full of hope and wise experience.

The author fortunately begins the journey with a conversation about prayer and its importance in all facets of life. Suggestions are gently offered as to how prayer can change our lives and relationships not only with God but with self and others. There is also time for reflection and journaling, and a closing prayer. Other suggestions in this section include God's seeking for us, His kingdom of love, silence, resting in prayer, and God's abundant life.

These and other topics throughout the book are presented in a gentle and nurturing way so that the reader feels invited, not forced, to participate.

Other sections (called "weeks") point out how to make a spiritual check-up, questions one might well ask of self, and activities which might enhance one's spiritual life.

Living with and in one's birth or married family will often provide both obstacles and encouragement in the spiritual life.

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But being relational people, we need to reflect on those with whom we live, worship, pray and work. These are important ingrediants to the life called community. It is a form of life necessary for truly living a Christian life.

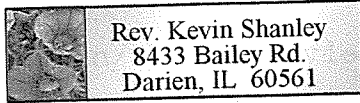
Another important aspect of healing troubled hearts is making people more aware of the actual blessings in their lives. Too often people focus mainly on the negative aspects of life without counting the blessings that are also a goodly part of each life. Such a positive approach encourages people to truly examine their lives for the most positive experiences that enhance our earthly living.

But it is also vitally necessary for people to examine what wounds, if any, they received in childhood. They may be physical, emotional, ^(OR) spiritual but need tending to for all. Then the healing process can truly begin. This would then especially focus on incidents of children losing parents or other cherished people through death or other negative circumstances. Such incidents can cause great trauma in a person's childhood. But in this process, children can begin to give and receive compassion.

It is also important for all people to know, understand, and believe that they are created in the image and likeness of God. This is a necessary step in their growth towards maturity.

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In this way people can be encouraged to be who they truly are.

Overcoming fear, the author adds, is important to every person. There is a certainty-seeking and power-seeking part of each of us that lives in fear — even fearing looking bad in some circumstances or losing one's place with ~~the~~ the "in" group. People need to overcome such fear in order to live an authentic life. And this is truly what healing of fear brings to life. Such healing also implies that we not only need to ^(be) forgiven but also to forgive others. Both are life-giving to ourselves and others. Such forgiving is part of a process that actually allows wounds to heal, life to become joyful, and love to grow.

And much can be said the same in many ways of anger which imprisons both the instigator and the recipient. Much of life is wasted by those who spend time in anger instead of living a forgiving and loving existence here on earth as a prelude to eternity. The author also spends time not only in discussing depression but also how to overcome it, and also to recognize its symptoms. The depression stage of grieving or forgiving often develops because people have turned their anger in upon themselves and become refugees in a foreign emotional land.

To add to the book's worth, the author has added an outline for a group workshop at the end. And excellent book.

(Fr. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.)