

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

In May, we recognize that persons living with mental illnesses, and their families, face many challenges and show how our faith leads us to create communities where all are welcome.

Everybody Belongs...

In Baptism, we become *equal in dignity* as necessary members of the Body of Christ. Because everybody belongs, we provide support and accommodations so that all may worship, grow in faith and celebrate the sacraments. Such access is a baptismal right of every Catholic, including persons with mental illnesses.

Ministry with Persons with Disabilities
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
713-741-8730

Info on Mental Illnesses

- 1 in 5 Americans; or 500,000 adults and 150,000 children in Harris County live with a diagnosable mental illness (2010 Census).
- Mental Illness is an illness of the brain, just like a heart attack is an illness of the heart.
- Mental Illnesses are not visible. People with mental illness are often exceptionally bright and creative.
- 6.9% or 16 million American adults live with major depression.
- A lack of awareness and stigma often causes people to withdraw rather than ask for help.
- 90% of those who die by suicide have an underlying mental illness. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- Mental Illnesses can be effectively treated.

Catholic Resources

NCPD (National Catholic Partnership on Disability)
www.catholicswithmentalillness.org

National Catholic Council on Addictions
<http://nccatoday.org>

For I Am Lonely and Afflicted - Catholic Bishops of New York State
<http://tinyurl.com/mqra6c8>

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Tips for Creating Faith Communities Where All are Welcome

Since all people are created in the image of God, their dignity and worth cannot be diminished by any condition including mental illness.

- Use *people first* language by referring to a “person with mental illness,” rather than “a mentally ill person.”
- If a person is experiencing a psychotic episode or mania; remain calm. Listen with compassion. Use “I” statements” not “you” statements.
- When calling 911 is necessary request a “Crisis Intervention Team” or “CIT Officer.”
- Invite speakers from the medical community, mental health field, or advocacy groups to offer presentations or assistance.
- Include Mass intercessions for persons with mental illness, and their families.
- Continue learning more about the “real lives” of others in your faith community and in the world. Be Christ to someone with mental illness; they seek hope and understanding.

“Respect for persons with disabilities and including them equally in the life of the Church is crucial for our understanding of the human person.”

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston

Contact the Ministry with Persons with Disabilities
in the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis
at 713-741-8730.

“Every parish should seek out its parishioners with...disabilities, support them with love and concern, and ensure that they have ready access to a catechetical program suited to their needs and abilities.”

-National Directory for Catechesis, 61

Other Resources

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Greater Houston
www.namigreaterhouston.org 713-970-4419

American Psychiatric Association Foundation
www.psychiatry.org/faith

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