

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Embrace. Welcome. Participate.

All people are created in the image of God; their dignity and worth cannot be diminished by mental illness.

As Catholics, we are called to embrace an ever-clearer vision of each human person as created by God with inherent dignity and worth. This truth is not diminished when someone struggles with various illnesses or behaviors, including mental health concerns. Pope St. John Paul II reminded us of this fundamental truth in 1996 at the International Conference for Health Care Workers:

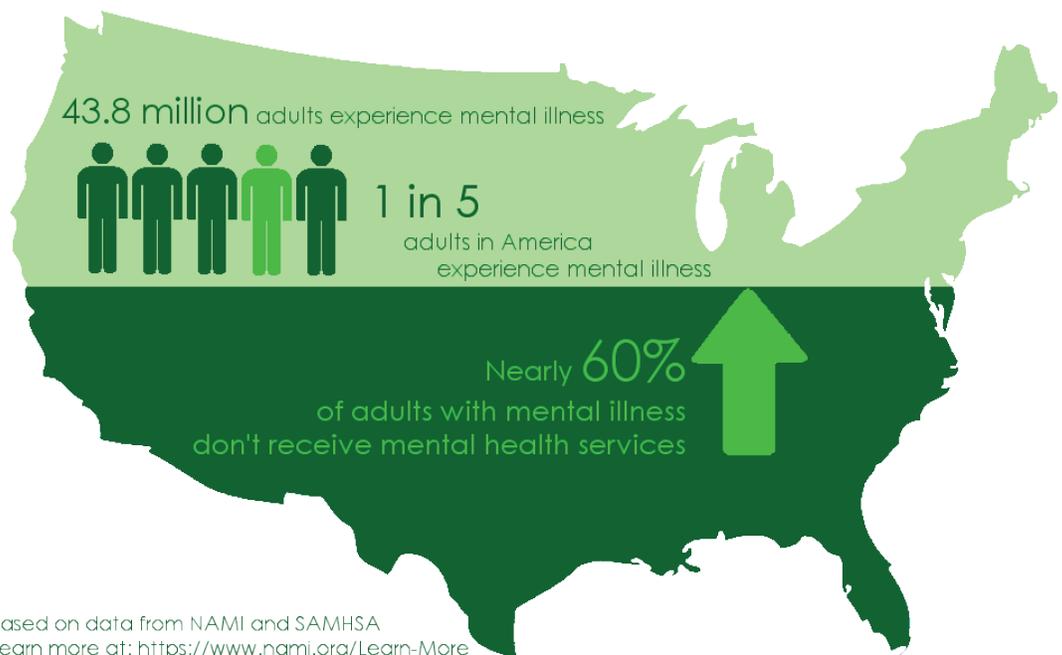
“Whoever suffers from mental illness always bears God’s image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they always have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such.”

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think and act and helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices (Mentalhealth.gov). When a person suffers from mental illness, it can interfere with their everyday life and can result in an inability to cope with life’s ordinary demands and routines (NCPD).

Mental illness, as with any health-related issue, can vary in severity and look very different from person to person. Oftentimes, we may not observe the warning signs that someone is struggling with their mental health. This does not mean that the warning

signs are not there, or that the problem is insignificant and should be ignored. Unfortunately, there is also stigma attached to mental illness which may lead people who are struggling to isolate themselves, choosing not to share that they are hurting, and not seek help or treatment.

As a faith community, we are called to support our brothers and sisters suffering from a mental health condition, offering the unconditional and non-judgmental love they deserve. Rather than accept the misconceptions surrounding mental illness, we can increase our awareness of its symptoms and effects, and identify the local resources. Moreover, we must be in relationship with



others, bringing hope and comfort in times of crisis or pain by offering prayers of healing and accompaniment through treatment. Together, the parish can be a place of healing for all people and their families!

PRAYER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Creator God,
You made all things
and created humanity
in Your own image.
Help us to always be
mindful of this dignity in
ourselves and others.
May we not despair
when faced with the
struggles of mental
health, but instead find
hope in you, knowing
you have a greater
plan for us. Guide
us to be advocates
in our families,
parishes, schools, and
communities, always
seeking to build a
communion that
embraces and values
all people. We ask this
in the name of Your
son, Jesus our Savior
and Shepherd of
Peace. Amen.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Personal: How would I react if I found out a close friend or family member has been diagnosed with a mental health condition? How has the media shaped my image of mental illness? What can I do to reduce the stigma?

Family: How do we as a family care for the mental health of each family member? How can we inform and assist our parish to respond to our needs and/or the needs of families struggling with mental health?

Parish: Are we aware of the barriers that people with a mental health condition and their families experience in our parish? How can we make our parish a safe space for all families? How do we ensure our parish is welcoming and inviting all people into a deeper relationship with God - not only into participation but also in leadership?

SEEKING HELP

If you or someone you know is in need of mental health services, contact Ohio Mental Health & Addiction Services toll-free hotline at **1-877-275-6364**. This hotline provides information and referrals for local resources throughout Ohio.

If you or someone you know is suicidal, in danger of harming themselves, or in emotional distress, contact the confidential National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-8255** or text **HOME** to **741741**. Trained crisis workers are available to talk 24/7. In cases of imminent risk and/or danger, please call **911**.

In Ohio...

Suicide is the **2nd** leading cause of death for ages 15-34

Suicide is the **3rd** leading cause of death for ages 10-14

On average, one person dies by suicide every five hours in the state.

Based on 2015 data from CDC. Learn more at afsp.org/statistics.