

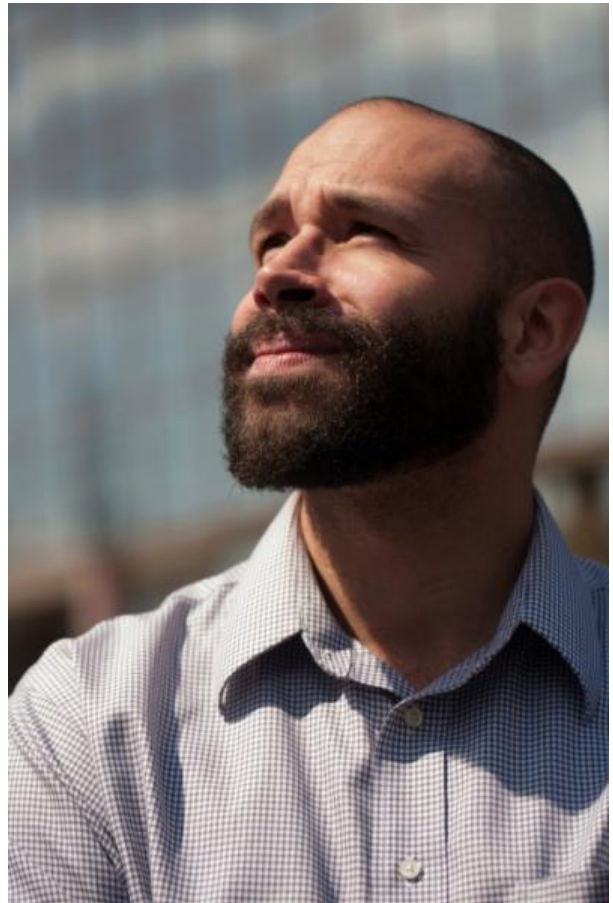


What a parish can do to support Catholics with Mental Illness



16 Specific Actions

1. Be a friend: Does your parish offers someone who can befriend them; a buddy program?
2. Compassionate Listening and Referral: Clergy and leaders listen with compassion and refer to professional services as needed. Follow up after referral.
3. Prayers of the Faithful: Incorporate prayers for mental illness at prayers of the faithful.
4. Homilies: Include references to persons with mental illnesses in homilies.
5. Hospital Visits: Ministry leaders visit those hospitalized with mental illness.
6. Social Justice Groups: Give the peace and justice ministry the opportunity to get involved in the systemic problems that affect persons with mental illness. At least one half of the prison population suffers with mental illness and at least one third of the homeless population suffers with mental illness.
7. Legislative Advocacy: Faith Communities can write letters and/or advocate directly with their elected officials to bring about justice to these inequities. Mental illness and the legislative process is a Faith Community issue since it deals with justice and compassion for people in need.



8. Housing and Jobs: Faith Communities can encourage their members to help find jobs and places to live for persons with mental illness.
9. Church Bulletins: Publicize the issues in the church bulletin or newsletter through a series of short articles on the subject.
10. Healing Prayer Services: Healing prayer and services, e.g. Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, for illnesses should include mental illnesses.
11. Speakers Available for Church Groups: The topic of mental illness should be encouraged as subject matter for one of their meetings. Speakers could be from the medical community, mental health field, or advocacy groups.
12. Peer to Peer ministry: Peer to Peer ministry is an important outreach for persons suffering with major mental illness. People with mental illness often do not have a circle of friends that care for them. An important element to recovery and healing is a caring community.
13. Annual Liturgical Celebration: Network within your vicariate or with other Faith Communities in the area, and have an annual liturgical celebration of the lives of persons with a mental illness, their families, and mental health workers/professionals.
14. Host Events: Host speakers, workshops, and educational events for families of persons with a mental illness.
15. Use People First Language: Promote the dignity of the individual. God loves us each as we are. Use “people first language” e.g., phrases like “people with a mental illness” rather than “the mentally ill.” No one wants to be known as a disease.
16. Show DVD: Show the DVD “Welcomed and Valued” to parish groups using the discussion guide provided. [Available at Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

