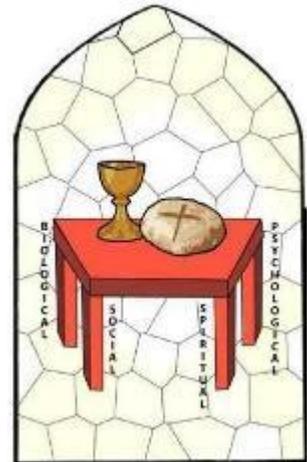


April 2010

## May is Mental Health Month

May is a good time to talk about mental illness and the effects on the individual and the family. Some suggestions:

- use the bulletin articles on the NCPD website (For short bulletin articles [click here](#) , for six week series [click here](#))
- use the article on "Stained Glass Window" that talks about inclusion ([click here](#))
- prayers of the faithful ([click here](#))
- show the DVD "Welcomed and Valued" (available at website, [click here](#))
- use information from the "resource binder" for an article on mental illness ([click here](#) for Resource Binder, or [here](#) for printed version)
- host a mass celebrating the lives of people with mental illness, their families, care givers
- celebrate St. Dymphna's feast day, May 15<sup>th</sup> (see homily in reflections section)
- resources:
  - NCPD - <http://www.ncpd.org/>
  - NAMI - <http://www.nami.org/>
  - Pathways to Promise - <http://www.pathways2promise.org/>
  - Mental Health Ministries - <http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/>
  - Archdiocese Chicago Mental Illness Ministries - <http://www.miministry.org/>



### SHARING FROM THE NETWORK

*The following is from a priest who attended last year's NCPD workshop on mental illness while he was studying in Chicago. Father Agu attended the one day workshop in Chicago and is now back in his home diocese in Nigeria.*

Dear Tom,

I am happy to let you know that we have started meetings in my Diocese for those who have mental disability and are very poor. I supervised their inaugural meeting in Awhum-Enugu state of Nigeria. The officers were elected to concretize our people on the need to take care of those living with mental disability. The Bishop of the Diocese was informed about the take of the group and he was happy to know that people are interested to help people with disability.

Fr. P. E. Agu

***Congratulations to Father Agu who saw a need and is meeting it!***

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***From Letty Breton, NCPD-Council on MI Board Member:***

Just got back from a meeting with my pastor and the family services director.

For now we will have:

- Once a month, a petition will focus on mental illness (Prayer of the Faithful).
- Once a month, a rosary will be dedicated.
- Once a year, will have a mass in May.
- Periodic bulletin articles on the issues.

... and, I will be contacting the diocese for a meeting with the director of ministries for persons with disabilities to see what can be done from that level.

Then... I will continue with my gardening!

Blessings to all,

Letty

***Letty, please don't forget the gardening! Balance in our lives and ministry keeps the "weeds" out of a lot of things.***



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***Ann Sherzer, Director, Ministry with Persons with Disabilities, Diocese of Kalamazoo, let us know that the National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is May 6, 2010. Information can be found on the SAMHSA website at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).***

*As mentioned in our last newsletter, Kathy and Dave Withers of our Catholic Mental Illness Network are the organizers of a workshop in Cleveland titled:*

"Mental Health Professionals and Communities of Faith Responding to Those with Mental Illness"

The date is Saturday, June 26<sup>th</sup>  
from 8:30 to 3:30 at  
The Center for Pastoral Leadership  
28700 Euclid Avenue  
Wickliffe, OH 44092.

You can contact Kathy by email at [catholic@ameritech.net](mailto:catholic@ameritech.net)  
or leave a phone message at (216) 651-1511.

It looks to be an excellent day and it is also an excellent model for a workshop. Full details were in our last newsletter which can be seen at [www.ncpd.org/views-news-policy/news/minetworknews](http://www.ncpd.org/views-news-policy/news/minetworknews):

## REFLECTIONS

### **Homily Given on the Feast of St. Dymphna, May 15th**

**by Deacon Tom Lambert**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, St. Dymphna's father, a Celtic king, became deeply depressed over the death of his wife. Sadly, he came to see his daughter as the re-incarnation of his wife and tried to force her to marry him.

She fled to Belgium and the king followed her to Geel and flew into a rage and murdered her. There she was buried in a crypt beneath the local church. Six centuries later workmen uncovered the crypt and found the tomb made of a shining white stone only found hundreds of miles away from Geel. The town's people considered it a miracle that God had protected her in this way and soon reports of healing spread across the area, in particular healing of people with mental illness.

The site became a pilgrimage center. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a new church was built, the church of St Dymphna. A makeshift hospital was located at the church and soon people were coming to find comfort and care for their loved ones with mental illness. The church was soon overwhelmed with patients and the parish priest began to ask people to take patients into their homes. According to the way of life in the Middle Ages, this meant that the person accepted into the home was involved in the cooking, cleaning, farming and total way of life. For those who were too sick to work there was a hospital that the townspeople supported but most were cared for in the homes of the villagers. Thus what we know today as "foster care" began in 13<sup>th</sup> century Geel.

One of the many remarkable things about this story is that during this period of time in Europe, people who exhibited symptoms of mental illness were believed to be possessed by demons. They were either locked away in prisons or banished from their homes and communities. Yet in Geel, truly a miracle of understanding and acceptance was taking place as people with mental illness were treated with dignity and compassion that enabled them to experience recovery from their illness.

It should also be noted that in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Napoleon ordered all people who were mentally ill to be committed to asylums. Despite that order, the people of Geel refused to hand over the ones they considered to be part of their family.

Today in Geel, there are over 700 families hosting over 800 individuals in their homes. For over eight centuries Geel has maintained a history of compassionate loving care for those persons society often ignores or shuns. A symbol of the town of Geel's outreach is a clock with no hands. This means that you have care for as long as you need!

Unfortunately, in the state of Illinois we are still living in a Dark Ages mentality. Our state is ranked among the worst in the country for our dysfunctional system of care for people with mental illness. Families looking for help often run into a system that is underfunded and overwhelmed. While there are pockets of excellence, tragically, the systemic problems are not being adequately addressed.

Sadly, the largest deliverer of services for people with mental illness is Cook County jail, (more people are treated for mental illness in prisons and jails than in all the public and private hospitals combined) and many people without insurance wind up living in nursing homes not equipped to handle their needs or are homeless on the streets. I often hear their stories as I welcome them at the parish where I serve.

I believe in miracles. God's grace works within us and we too can do great things. I see people like Jim and Shirley and Teresa Weber (sponsors of this celebration) and many others who, through God's grace, experience the healing power of God by using the circumstances of their lives to give honor to God by making the lives of others better.

This is the miracle through the intercession of St. Dymphna, experienced in Geel. So today, as we ask St. Dymphna to intercede for us, let us pray that we are able to experience the love and comfort of God and the grace to make the lives of others better by bringing them the comfort of a God who loves us and wants to walk with us. And let us pray and work for justice—that people with mental illness and their families find a healthcare system that works for them—not against them.

Just as the paschal candle symbolizes the light of Christ. You and I are called to be the light of Christ to a world filled with the darkness of stigma and misunderstanding so that people with mental illness and their families can find hope and recovery.

May God bless you for all you do.

*I would like to share with you a homily I gave during Lent on the Gospel of John (9:1-41) on the blind man who came to know Jesus despite the prejudice of the people . The Gospel passage speaks to discrimination and stigma, as well as the faith and courage of those who are discriminated against because of their mental or physical "disability."*

Two weeks ago I was having lunch with a retired school teacher. He told me a story about a blind girl in his high school. After gym class one day, the girl was in the locker room getting ready for the next class. All of a sudden all the lights went out in the locker room and all the girls in the locker room started screaming. The blind girl asked the girl standing next to her, "What happened?" The friend told her that all the lights went out and they couldn't see. The blind girl calmly turned to her friend and said, "Don't worry, take my hand, I'll lead you out."

The blind girl's classmates learned a valuable lesson that day. She may be blind but she isn't "disabled." She just sees in other ways. (Read the full homily by [clicking here.](#))

## RESOURCES

### NCPD WEBINARS

As mentioned in the last newsletter, please tell people about NCPD webinars on mental illness at [www.ncpd.org/webinars](http://www.ncpd.org/webinars). Posted at this site are links to view the webinar and the webinar's accompanying materials. These are available for free and are valuable resources for ministry to people with mental illness and their families. There are three on mental illness.

**October 20, 2009:**

*Access to Tools in Addressing Suicide:  
Pastoral Supports and Prevention Strategies*

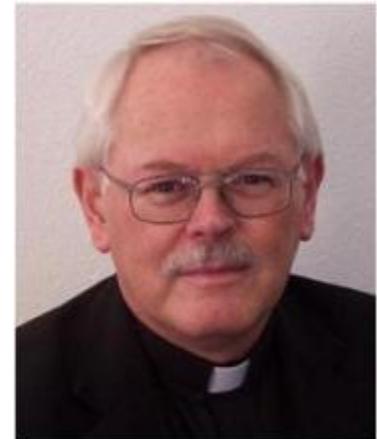
**October 6, 2008:**

*Come to the Table:  
Nurturing the Sacramental Life of People with Mental Illness*

**October 10, 2007:**

*Supporting People with Mental Illness in your Parish*

\* Webinars are available for replay up to one year from the event date. They will also be available for purchase at <http://www.ncpd.org/resources>.



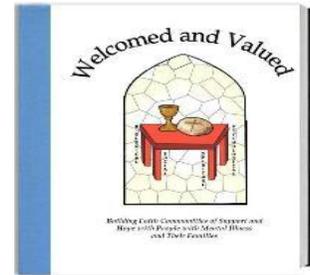
Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI,  
speaker in webinar on suicide

## NCPD : WELCOMED AND VALUED DVD & RESOURCE MANUAL



The *Welcomed and Valued* DVD and *Resource Manual* can be ordered on the NCPD website at [www.ncpd.org/resources](http://www.ncpd.org/resources).

The DVD Discussion Starters and the Resource Manual are both available online for a free download ([Click here](#)).

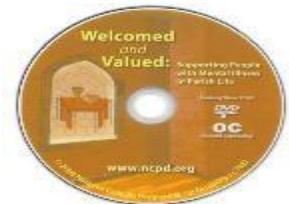


We are hopeful of getting funding to do more one-day awareness workshops and 3-day advanced trainings like those piloted in 2009. The Council can also be a resource for people planning their own local meetings. Please let us know if we can be of assistance.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Advanced Conversations: Youth and Young Adults and Mental Illness**

NCPD's spring webinar will be May 4, 2010 and is devoted to the topic of *Advanced Conversations: Youth and Young Adults and Mental Illness*. More information in upcoming newsletters. ([Click here](#) to visit the NCPD Webinar web page.)



**The following are the NAMI FaithNet events to be held at the NAMI National Convention (June 30 - July 3, 2010, Washington, DC) in addition to the usual exhibit table. [Click here](#) for more information about the Convention.**

**The NAMI FaithNet Networking Session:** Wednesday, June 30, 3:15 pm to 4:30 pm.  
**One may attend without registering for the entire NAMI Conference.**

**NAMI FaithNet Networking Session:** Wednesday, June 30, 3:15 pm to 4:30 pm.

**Wrestling with Our Inner Angels: Faith, Mental Illness and the Journey to Wholeness,** Nancy Clare Kehoe, Ph.D.: Friday, July 2, 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm.

**Getting Started with NAMI FaithNet Outreach,** Craig Rennebohm and Carole Wills: Friday, July 2, 3:45 pm to 5:15 pm.

We are looking for people to help with the newsletter!! If you would like to help with editing, writing or finding stories to share, please contact me at 773-525-0453.

We are also looking for you to tell us about your ministry; what you are doing, what are your hopes, and what are your struggles. One of our goals is to network ideas and ministries so that we can all share in the day to day life of people trying to make a difference by being Christ to one another.

Please send all emails to me, Deacon Tom Lambert, at [olmcinfo2@aol.com](mailto:olmcinfo2@aol.com) and put **NCPD Council on MI Network** in the subject line. You can also call me at 773-525-0453 if you have any questions or ideas.

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May God bless all you do.

Deacon Tom Lambert  
Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, Commission on Mental Illness  
Co-Chair, NCPD Council on Mental Illness



**Published by the NCPD Council on Mental Illness**

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**Please consider making a donation to support the mission of the Council on Mental Illness. Your help allows this effort to continue.**

**Donate  
to NCPD**

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### **Our Mission:**

**Following Jesus who embraced all, we assist the Catholic Community in reaching out to and accompanying our brothers and sisters with mental illness and their families, assuring their rightful place in the Church and society.**

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**National Catholic Partnership on Disability**  
415 Michigan Avenue, N.E., Suite 95  
Washington, DC 20017-4501  
202-529-2933; 202-529-2934 (tty); 202-529-4678 (fax)  
Email: [ncpd@ncpd.org](mailto:ncpd@ncpd.org) / Website: [www.ncpd.org](http://www.ncpd.org)

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The logo depicts the Eucharistic table to which all are called.

It also presents four dimensions to personal wholeness, each important to healing and recovery:

spiritual, biological, psychological, and social.

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