



National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)

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**NCPD Council on Mental Illness Encourages Observance of the
National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery & Understanding
and Mental Illness Awareness Sunday**

Washington, DC –The newly-formed *NCPD Council on Mental Illness*, an outreach program of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) is encouraging Catholic observance of the National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding on October 3, 2006, and Mental Illness Awareness Sunday, October 8, 2006. This national effort is designed to promote pastoral sensitivity to, and inclusion of, individuals and their family members who are affected by mental illness. It is an opportunity for dioceses and parishes to raise awareness about this important issue, to educate Catholics about mental illness, and to help reduce the unfortunate stigma often associated with it.

These two events are part of National Mental Illness Awareness Week established in 1990 by a Congressional Resolution. Each year, organizations and advocacy groups such as the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and the Mental Health Association sponsor events to

attract public attention and support for improved services and inclusion. The faith community can play an important role in that effort.

Mrs. Connie Rakitan, Co-Chair of the *NCPD Council on Mental Illness*, notes: “The Gospel for Tuesday, October 3 (Luke 9:51-56) recounts the inhospitality of a Samaritan village to Jesus and his disciples – the same lack of welcome often experienced in society by people who struggle with mental illness. The Council hopes that the Catholic community will take leadership in reducing stigma and becoming places of loving welcome for all.”

Local observances may include liturgies, prayer services, educational presentations, and intercessions during Mass. It is also suggested that parish bulletins and diocesan newspapers publish information about mental illness. Pope Benedict XVI’s letter for 2006 World Day of the Sick, urging pastoral support for people with mental illness, their families, friends, chaplains, and service providers, can be used as a powerful catalyst for discussion and education. Specific resources and Internet links are available from NCPD at www.ncpd.org.

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NCPD was established in 1982 to advocate for welcome and justice for people with disabilities and their families within the Catholic Church and their communities. It launched the *NCPD Council on Mental Illness* in May 2006 to carry out the following 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.