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http://www.ncpd.org/press_releases.htm

NCPD Council on Mental Illness Launches Nationwide Initiative

Intersecting Catholic Faith, Parish Community Life, and Mental Illness

Local Parishes Have Unique Role in Process of Recovery

My faith is my priority in life, my Catholic faith is because I believe that I can live with this illness, I might get sick again but I'm learning new coping skills and my faith can help me do anything I want to do.

C. A., person with a mental illness

Washington, DC — In July 2009, the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) launches a new initiative to help parishes meet the needs of persons with **severe and persistent mental illness**. "Increasing Support and Hope in Catholic Parish Communities" was designed by NCPD's Council on Mental Illness. The new "Support and Hope" campaign consists of regional awareness workshops; a new 30-minute DVD film, *Welcomed and Valued: Supporting People with Mental Illness in Parish Life*; a three-day advanced training; online webinars (and related online content) as well as support for families, clergy, parish and diocesan workers, and interested others.

The goal of the initiative is to help participants in becoming better able to embrace people with mental illness and their families in a parish setting, rather than to become experts in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. Additionally, participants will become familiar with *the unique role that a parish community has in the process of recovery*.

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, praises this effort of the NCPD Council on Mental Illness:

As Episcopal Moderator of NCPD, I fully endorse this important and necessary venture, to help parishes welcome, include and serve the spiritual needs of Catholics with mental illness. Fundamental to all our work is

honoring the life and dignity of the human person, regardless of circumstance, as affirmed in the 1978 *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities*. We are all part of the Body of Christ. I applaud this well-designed effort by the NCPD Council on Mental Illness, and encourage clergy, parishes and dioceses to make every effort to participate in one of these programs.

July 2009 Awareness Workshops. This July, the Council offers a one-day “Support and Hope” Awareness Workshop in three locations throughout the United States:

Washington, D.C., July 11, 2009
Chicago, Illinois, July 21, 2009
Portland, Oregon, July 24, 2009

Register online at www.ncpd.org

The “Support and Hope” Awareness Workshop will not only introduce participants to the health, social, and emotional needs of people with mental illness, but will also demonstrate how a parish can respond within the context of sacred scripture, Catholic teaching, and spiritual healing. There will be information on how parishes can provide direct personal and family support, while creating appropriate boundaries that honor the need for confidentiality. For more information, go to www.ncpd.org.

Other topics covered will be the cycle of healing, recovery and relapse, as well as overcoming the stigma of conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disease, or depression with compassionate, Christ-filled listening.

Catholic teaching on suicide will also be addressed. A follow-up to the suicide discussion will be presented in October 2009, when NCPD will present a 90-minute web seminar specifically on suicide prevention and pastoral supports.

The major cost of the Awareness Workshop is provided by a grant from a generous benefactor to NCPD’s Council on Mental Illness. **A nominal fee of \$10** will help defray expenses for a continental breakfast, lunch and materials.

All concerned about the welcome and support of parishioners with mental illness and their families are urged to attend, including priests and consecrated religious, deacons, seminarians, pastoral and diocesan staff, Catholic Charities personnel, people with mental illness and their families, catechetical leaders, parish nurses, directors of religious education, lay ecclesial ministers, teachers, youth ministers, liturgists, disability advocates, ushers, care ministers, chaplains, social workers, healthcare workers, and pastoral counselors. Registration is at www.ncpd.org.

The workshop will be led by members of the NCPD Council on Mental Illness, national leaders in this area of ministry. The **Washington, DC workshop on July 11** will feature Detroit-based Fr. Bob Malloy, OFM Cap., a certified chaplain with people with mental illness; Connie Rakitan, MPS, a co-founder of Chicago's "Faith and Fellowship" ministry, providing spiritual and social support to adults with mental illness, and Janice L. Benton, Executive Director of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD).

Presenters at the **Chicago workshop on July 21** include Ann Sherzer, Director of the Office for Persons with Disabilities in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Michigan; Deacon Tom Lambert, President of "Faith and Fellowship" and co-chair of Archdiocese of Chicago Commission on Mental Illness; and Lissette Mira-Amaya, Clinical Supervisor of Recovery Programs for Kalamazoo's Beacon Special Living Services.

The **Portland, Oregon workshop on July 24** will be led by Dorothy Coughlin, director of the Archdiocese of Portland's Office for People with Disabilities and member of the NCPD Board of Directors; and Dr. Thomas Welch, MD, adult and forensic psychiatrist, with an MA in pastoral ministry.

Media. A thirty-minute video, ***Welcomed and Valued***, produced by the NCPD's Council on Mental Illness, will premiere at the workshops. ***Welcomed and Valued*** features people with mental illness explaining their situations and how a range of spiritual, psychological, social, and biological approaches more fully address their needs. They also share their experiences of faith:

No, you can't get well without God. I think the amount of time I take to pray every day, God is my divine healer. I think without God I couldn't have done it.

I think my faith is the only thing that pulls me through the struggles that I've had. I pray every day, read the Bible every day, say the rosary every day and if I didn't I don't think I could get through the day.

Another topic covered is how parishes can respond to a person with mental illness who is disruptive or troubling, using some standard principals.

Fr. Bob Malloy explains a hoped-for outcome of the "Support and Hope" workshop:

The most important thing I think I could pass on to a pastoral worker or somebody in a parish, is the need for a person to be accepted and loved, not in a phony way, not in a patronizing way, but to be genuinely accepted.

September 2009 Advanced Training Opportunities. Following the July introductory workshops, participants may apply to attend an **advanced training** sponsored by the NCPD Council on Mental Illness on **September 26-28, 2009**. It will be held at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL. This training is designed for those interested in providing their own local “Support and Hope” Awareness Workshops and to enhance outreach to people with mental illness and their families. Contact NCPD regarding the application process at www.ncpd.org or by calling 202-529-2933.

Immediately following this training are two additional educational opportunities (also held at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows).

- **September Interfaith Summit** on September 29-October 1, organized by Pathways to Promise, an interfaith center supporting caring ministries with people with mental illness. The NCPD Council on Mental Illness works collaboratively with Pathways to Promise, and two Council members serve on its Board of Directors.
- **Erase the Stigma of Mental Illness** is an interfaith conference which will feature Rev. Craig Rennebohm, on October 2-3.

Advanced Training participants and other interested individuals are encouraged to attend these valuable meetings.

October 2009 Suicide Prevention Webinar. On October 20, 2009, NCPD offers an online session on suicide prevention and pastoral supports with Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, and Claire Woodruff, moderated by Dr. Thomas Welch. Noted author and columnist, Fr. Rolheiser is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. More information on the highly respected NCPD Webinar Series is at www.ncpd.org.

Archived Webinars on Parish-Based Support. NCPD has presented two previous webinars on how parishes can meet the needs of Catholics with mental illness. The first, presented in 2007, is entitled “Supporting People with Mental Illness in Your Parish.” The second, presented in 2008, details how parishes can nurture the sacramental life of persons with these challenges. These webinars are available free by visiting www.ncpd.org

Network on Mental Illness. Following the summer and fall programs, the NCPD Council on Mental Illness plans to set up an informal network to share resources and ideas. Check the NCPD website for more details.

And at the NCPD website, the NCPD Council on Mental Illness has a dedicated page with resources, details on the scriptural basis of their work, and contact information; visit www.ncpd.org.

The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) helps all Catholics access their faith through their network of clergy, diocesan directors, parishes, nonprofit ministries, and families.

For more information, please contact: Janice L. Benton, Executive Director, National Catholic Partnership on Disability, at 202-529-2933 or at jbenton@ncpd.org or Bob Quinlan, NCPD Project Manager at 202-529-2933 and bquinlan@ncpd.org.

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Mission of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability:

Rooted in Gospel values that affirm the dignity of every person, the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) works collaboratively to ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of the life of the Church and society.

Mission of the NCPD Council on Mental Illness:

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.

www.ncpd.org