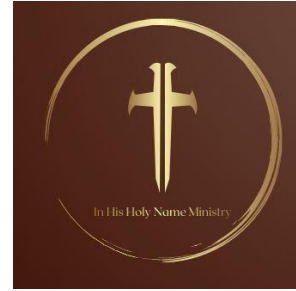


In His Holy Name Ministry



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What is a Mental Health Ministry?

Mental illnesses are common in the United States. Nearly one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness (51.5 million in 2019). Mental illnesses include many different conditions that vary in degree of severity, ranging from mild, to moderate, to severe. And can be present in any and every socio-economic grouping, city or town, and shows no indifference to gender, sexual orientation, creed or race.

Mental health recovery requires a holistic approach to care. The church and spirituality must be part of that success. Unfortunately, many suffering from mental illness feel stigmatized and isolated, even unwanted from the church. The church and its servants must bring these abandoned souls back, meet them on their level, and welcome them with open arms.

But where do we start? It begins with education and dismissing the fear toward this marginalized population. Those who claim a Christian connection should remember that Jesus was all about serving the poor; the poor in health, the poor in economic prosperity, and the poor in spirit. The New Testament, no matter the translation, has numerous examples and teachings with this theological philosophy. Education starts with understanding and applying our Christian faith.

But it doesn't end there. Each community and parish can contact their local community mental health center and set up a small course on 'Mental Health First Aide'. In most cases this is at no cost to the requesting community and they often will come to you. It's really that simple.



The third step is to discuss the acceptance of this population. From catechism class, to the homily, to church ministries the concept of acceptance must be discussed over and over again. Biblical evidence for this concept of acceptance is found in 1 Peter 4:10-11 (NIV), “10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

A mental health ministry can then be organized and supported by the church. Members don’t need to hold a psychology-degree or a certificate or license to work with the mentally ill. With a little education and acceptance, we can work within the Sacred Heart of Christ and make a noticeable difference in lives beyond ourselves.

Remember, Mental health ministry leaders and teams do not take on the roles of psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists. Rather, they supply prayer, welcoming support and inclusion, and human connections as an adjunct to the standard western model of standard regarding mental illness.

The more the church reaches out in their community the therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, the more these professionals will see and valued the utilization of such ministries and be integrated as part of an interdisciplinary team in the treatment of the individuals and families of those suffering from mental illness.

