

Suicide Awareness Weekend Message from Bishop Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we gather for the celebration of the Eucharist this weekend, our hearts turn with tenderness toward those among us who carry the pain of suicide. We hold close in prayer the families who have lost loved ones, those who struggle with mental illness and all who walk alongside them with love, courage and faith. In recent years, our understanding of mental health has grown. We now recognize that mental illness is not a moral failing, but a genuine health condition — one that calls for our compassion, our support and our pastoral care. Suicide is often the heartbreaking result of an illness that overwhelms a person's ability to cope. It is a reality that can touch any life. Throughout the month of September, we join others across the country in observing Suicide Prevention Month. I've invited all our Area Catholic Communities to mark this weekend as a time of special remembrance — for those who have died by suicide, and for the family members, friends, and neighbors who grieve their loss. We know that one in four people live with mental illness, and that approximately 1.5 million people attempt suicide each year. Many of us carry the memory of someone we've known — a loved one, a friend, a member of our parish—whose life ended too soon under the weight of mental suffering. To the families who mourn, please know that your grief is held in the heart of the Church. We see you. We stand with you. And we pray with you. We believe in the boundless mercy of God — a mercy that reaches into the deepest darkness and brings light. We trust in the loving embrace of our Lord for all His children, especially those most in need of his peace. Christ's own suffering and death opened the gates of Heaven, and we hold fast to that promise of eternal life. We also lift up those who are currently navigating the challenges of mental illness, and the families who support them. You are not alone. Seeking help is a sign of strength — a courageous step toward healing. Our diocese is committed to fostering a community where the dignity of every person impacted by mental health challenges is affirmed, and where resources for support and healing are accessible and encouraged. To those who are struggling: please reach out. Talk to someone you trust. Seek professional help. Know that your life is precious, and you are deeply loved. And to those who have survived the loss of a loved one to suicide: when you are ready, know that sharing your story can be a source of healing and hope for others. May this Suicide Healing and Remembrance Weekend be a powerful witness to the enduring love of Christ. Let us pray that His peace will fill every heart in need with courage and hope. May Our Lady of Sorrows, who stood faithfully at the foot of the Cross, intercede for us. And may Almighty God bless you all, † in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(resources included on back)

Diocesan Resources:

- <https://stcdio.org/mental-health-ministry>
- <https://stcdio.org/suicide-healing-and-remembrance>

Resources for those affected by suicide:

- **Red Bird** was founded on helping parents address the profound healing that needs to happen while also honoring the memory of the child. (redbird.love)
- ***When a Loved One Dies by Suicide Film Series*** This film series is a grief support resource for those experiencing suicide loss. It also explains Church teachings on suicide and offers prayers of comfort and support. (catholicmhm.org/whenalovedonediesbysuicide)

Resources for those struggling with suicidal thoughts or their mental health:

- Call the toll-free **Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at **9-8-8**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. **Call, Text or Chat!** This service is available to everyone, and multiple languages are available.
- For Recommendations Regarding Catholic Therapists:
 - o Catholic Therapist (www.catholictherapists.com/home)
 - o Catholic Counselors (www.catholiccounselors.com)
 - o Catholic Psychotherapy Association (cpa.ce21.com/directory)
 - o Divine Mercy University, mental health professional graduates (divinemercy.edu/alumni/directory)

Resources for those walking with those affected by suicide:

- The Sanctuary Course for Catholics is designed to raise awareness and start conversations in local parishes regarding mental health. (<https://sanctuarymentalhealth.org/catholics>)
- Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers is an international ministry working to bring mental health ministry to every Catholic parish and community. (<https://catholicmhm.org>)

St Dymphna, Pray for Us