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*"Prayer leads us forward in hope"
Pope Francis.*



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Army Roman Catholic Newsletter



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Prayer and its benefits on Mental Health

**"GOD is our Refuge and
Strength. A very present
Help in Trouble"
Psalm 46:1**



So, how can prayer make a positive impact on our Mental Health? The habit of saying a prayer to get through difficult times is not uncommon, that connection to something greater than yourself can strengthen emotional health. And, it is the positivity in the sense of meaning and connection that can have physiological effects on the body, such as calming your cardiovascular system and reducing your stress. There have been many medical studies done on the health benefits of prayer and researchers have linked regular spiritual practices with various health benefits including preventing depression. It is not only prayer that that can benefit your emotional health but, activities related to your spiritual practice or community involvement, such as singing, music and fellowship through attendance at Mass and other gatherings. Participating in these activities can offer a support system which in turn may reduce circumstances of anxiety and depression.

Welcome

From

**The Revd Fr Paschal J Hanrahan CF
Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain (Army)**

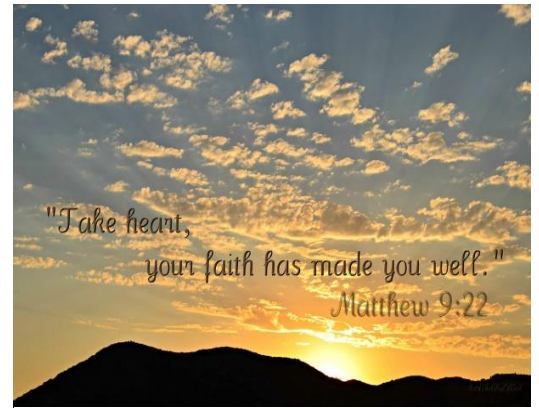


As things begin to return to some form of normality after the recent pandemic, many will reflect on how they have managed their psychological and emotional health. Prayer is a very real way of regaining and rebuilding that mental strength. I hope that this issue's main article will go some way in helping with that restoration.

Mental Health and Prayer

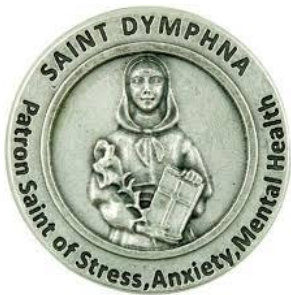
Mental Health is a phrase that has been constantly spoken about especially, over the last year or so, during the time we have been dealing with Coronavirus. So, what exactly is Mental Health? Mental Health refers to our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we cope with stress, interact with others and make choices. Good Mental Health allows people to realise their full potential, cope with the pressures of life, work productively and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

All sounds good so far? Well, there is more. We have said that prayer can combat stress and enhance our physical and mental well-being and there is medical research to back it up. The brain physically responds to prayer by producing serotonin. Serotonin is the key hormone that regulates our mood, feelings of well-being and happiness. This hormone effects your whole body by enabling brain cells and other nervous system cells to communicate with one another. Serotonin also aids sleeping, eating and digestion. It is important to state however, that although prayer can have a substantial effect on mental health it should not be considered an alternative to psychological treatment or therapy. Rather one of many methods that can promote mental well-being.



The righteous cry out, the Lord hears and he rescues them from all their afflictions. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed.
PSALM 34:18-20

Did you know the Roman Catholic church has several saints who have been presented as Patrons of Mental Health? Here are four you may choose to petition.



St Dymphna has become increasingly popular in recent years as someone to turn to when experiencing worry, fear, and anxiety. Saint Dymphna can be invoked for help with a range of mental issues, from daily stress to the more serious anxiety disorders. She was born in the 7th Century to a Royal Family in Ireland. However, her mother died when Dymphna was around fourteen years old. In his grief, her father Damon suffered from severe mental illness to the point of near insanity. He decided to marry Dymphna to replace his wife, but the girl fled to Belgium with two family servants and a priest, Saint Gerebernus. Unfortunately, Damon tracked down his daughter. After killing the priest, the soldiers were ordered to cut off Dymphna's head if she refused to marry her father. Remaining true to her faith, the teenager refused to comply.

Damon's response was to kill his daughter by his own hand. Dymphna is the patron saint for mental illness as well as therapists, incest victims, and the loss of parents. **Feast Day - 15th May**



Our Lady of Lourdes is a special patroness for healing. Regardless of the kind of illness, we know we can always turn to Our Lady for help. Pope Benedict XVI's message for the 2006 World Day of the Sick included a "special solicitude to the suffering of people with mental illness" and sought for the church communities to "bear witness to the tender mercy of God toward them." Lourdes, France, was the site of an apparition of Mary to Saint Bernadette Soubirous on February 11, 1858. Since then, the miraculous water continues to attract pilgrims from all over the world who come seeking physical, mental, and spiritual cures. **Feast Day - 11th February**



St Benedict Joseph Labre many have said that holiness has a bit of madness in the eyes of the world. This would certainly have been said of Benedict Joseph Labre during his life. He lived for many years as one cast out. Although he tried three times to enter various monasteries, the monks felt that he did not have a vocation. They were kind to him, but concerned about his lack of stability and propensity to wander. Benedict continued to persevere in seeking holiness. Considered eccentric, he spent most of his life somewhat removed from the world, living as a constant pilgrim and traveler. Many who suffer mental or emotional disorders feel unable to connect with the world and the people they come in contact with. For this reason, Saint Benedict Joseph Labre is a perfect saint for those who suffer from "illnesses of the human mind." **Feast Day - 16th April**



St Christina the Astonishing Christina was born in 1150, and at 15 was left an orphan, with two elder sisters. When she was 22, Christina had a seizure, was assumed to be dead, and in due course was carried in an open coffin to the church, where a Mass of requiem was begun. Suddenly, after the *Agnus Dei*, Christina sat up, soared to the beams of the roof, and there perched herself. Everyone fled from the church except her elder sister, who, though thoroughly frightened, gave a good example of recollection to the others by stopping till the end of Mass. The priest then made Christina come down (it was said that she had taken refuge up there because she could not bear the smell of sinful human bodies). She averred that she had actually been dead; that she had gone down to Hell and there recognized many friends,

and to Purgatory, where she had seen more friends, and then to Heaven. This was only the beginning of a series of hardly less incredible occurrences. Christina fled into remote places, climbed trees and towers and rocks, and crawled into ovens, to escape from the smell of humans [she could smell sin]. She would handle fire with impunity and, in the coldest weather, dash into the river, or into a mill-race and be carried unharmed under the wheel. She prayed balancing herself on the top of a hurdle or curled up on the ground in such a way that she looked like a ball. Not unnaturally, everyone thought she was mad or 'full of devils,' and attempts were made to confine her, but she always broke loose... She lived by begging, dressed in rags, and behaved in a terrifying manner. The last years of her life Christina passed in the convent of St. Catherine at Saint-Trond, and there she died at the age of seventy-four. Even while she lived there some who regarded her with great respect. Louis, Count of Looz, treated her as a friend, welcoming her to his castle, accepting her rebukes, and on his deathbed insisting on manifesting his conscience to her. Blessed Mary of Oignies had regard for her, the prioress of St. Catherine's praised her obedience, and St. Lutgardis sought her advice." **Feast Day - 24th July**



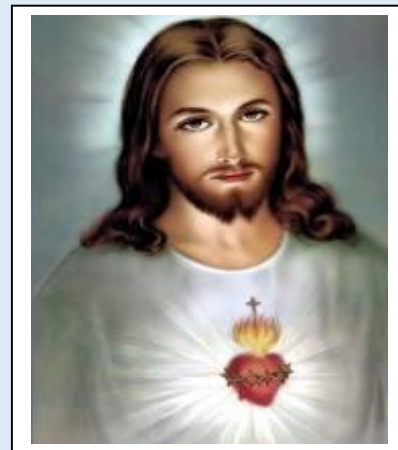
Loving God, you are always near to us, especially when we are weak, suffering and vulnerable. Reach out to those who experience mental illness. Lift their burdens, calm their anxiety, and quiet their fears. Surround them with your healing presence that they may know that they are not alone. We ask this through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes and in the name of your Son, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. AMEN.

Events >>>

Bishopric of The Forces Retreats 2021

Are you in need of stillness and sanctuary? Scripture gives us many examples of our Lord Jesus withdrawing from noise and bustle to pray and to gain respite (Mark 3:7, Luke 5:16). Subject to Government restrictions, there is the opportunity to find that same peace at one of the Bishopric of the Forces Retreats planned for 2021:

Worth Abbey, Sussex 4 - 7 Oct 21 Ampleforth Abbey, North Yorkshire
29 Nov- 2 Dec 21 DIN Reference 2020DIN01-124 gives more details. In the meantime, to express an interest or to receive an application form, contact Caroline.Routledge475@mod.gov.uk or rafprccpastoralassistant457@outlook.com



Key Dates in June & July

Corpus Christi – 6th June

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus – 11th June

The Nativity of John The Baptist – 24th June

St Peter & St Paul, Apostles – 29th June

St Thomas the Apostle – 3 July

St Mary Magdalene – 22nd July



Chaplain's Spotlight

Father John,

Q: What do you enjoy about being currently based in Cyprus?

A: The chance to experience another country and culture, the history, the people, the food – and the wines they produce here. Cyprus is a troubled but beautiful island.

Q: What is the one thing you could not live without?

A: WhatsApp! Honestly, as a tool to keep in touch with family and friends [my brother lives in New Zealand, I have a sister in Australia and family in Italy as well as the UK] it is invaluable – especially over the past fifteen months when travel has been so restricted.

Q: What is a memorable situation you have been in?

A: Being in St Peter's Square the day Pope John Paul II was shot – it was surreal and hard to believe it had happened. Incredibly it's now forty years ago (13 May 1981) – back when I was a Seminarian in Rome.

Q: Can you describe yourself in a few words?

A: Steady, cautious, reflective. An interesting question, as I might not have used those words about myself thirty or more years ago. I guess we change as the years roll by



(Fr John Nelson – Back Left)

Chaplains:

"Team Cyprus" It's not all work!

**Rev Mgr John Nelson CF,
based in Episkopi, Cyprus**

Information.....

If you wish to know more about Roman Catholic matters within the Army Faith Community, please contact: **Mrs Karen Horn** MBE Pastoral Administrative Assistant (PAA) to PRCC(A) at: ArmyRCPAA21@gmail.com