

## DAY FOR LIFE 2008: MENTAL HEALTH

Mental ill-health can happen to anyone – 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some stage in their life. Day for Life – the day in the Church's year dedicated to celebrating the sacredness of life – will focus this year on the theme of mental health.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S DAY FOR LIFE IN IRELAND – 5 October 2008

### USEFUL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

#### MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINES

Aware 1890 303 302 and 01 661 7211  
Samaritans 1850 60 90 90 and 01 872 7700  
and 08457 90 90 90 (Northern Ireland)  
TeenLine 1800 833 634 and 01 462 2122  
Schizophrenia Ireland 1890 621 631  
The Alzheimer Society of Ireland  
1800 341 341  
GROW 1890 474 474 and 01 873 4029  
Bodywhys 1890 200 444  
Console 1800 201 890 and 01 4595463 and  
01 6102640  
Lifeline 0808 808 8000 (Northern Ireland)

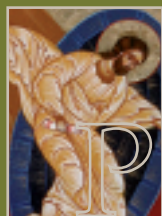
A mobile phone text service is also now available to facilitate people seeking information on mental health and/or for those looking for support. Text the word HeadsUp to 50424. This HeadsUp text service is organised by RehabCare.

#### DOCUMENTS

*A better understanding of depression* – Aware  
*Your mental health* – Health Service Executive

#### WEBSITES

[www.nahc.ie](http://www.nahc.ie) – National Association of Hospital Chaplains  
[www.catholichealthcare.ie](http://www.catholichealthcare.ie) – includes Pope Benedict XVI's message for the Catholic Church's World Day of the Sick, 2006, specifically addressing mental health  
[www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)  
[www.teenline.ie](http://www.teenline.ie)  
[www.sirl.ie](http://www.sirl.ie)  
[www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)  
[www.mhcir.ie](http://www.mhcir.ie)  
[www.ias.ie](http://www.ias.ie)  
[www.grow.ie](http://www.grow.ie)  
[www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)  
[www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie)  
[www.headstrong.ie](http://www.headstrong.ie)  
[www.console.ie](http://www.console.ie)  
[www.mindingyourhead.info](http://www.mindingyourhead.info)  
[www.niamh.co.uk](http://www.niamh.co.uk)

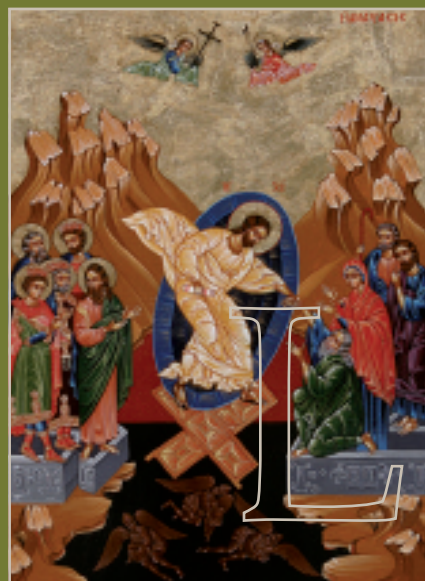


## PRAYER

We thank you Lord for the gift of life.

Help us to appreciate the unique dignity of every human person and the individual contribution they make to the world, in fulfilment of the task you give them.

Enable us by your grace to promote their well-being, serving you in one another in a spirit of generosity, through Christ Jesus Our Lord, Amen.



# DAY for LIFE

2008

[www.dayforlife.org](http://www.dayforlife.org)



Day for Life is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition. [www.dayforlife.org](http://www.dayforlife.org)

*'The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;  
he rescues those who are crushed in spirit'*

*Psalms 34*

Contributions can be made to 'Day for Life' Fund, c/o Irish Bishops' Conference, Hierarchy General Purposes Trust (Charity No CHY59566), Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland

This Day for Life Pastoral Letter is also available in the Irish and Polish languages online on the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference website [www.catholicbishops.ie](http://www.catholicbishops.ie)

The text of this leaflet is available in large print: [www.dayforlife.org](http://www.dayforlife.org)

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer Intentions for 2008:

'I invite you to pray for those with mental health difficulties: that they are not placed on the margins, but treated with respect and lovingly supported as they live their life with dignity.'



**Mental ill-health can happen to anyone** — 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some stage in their life. Millions of people across Ireland and Britain are either living with or know someone close to them who has been affected by depression, schizophrenia, suicide, self-harm, bereavement, substance misuse or mental health difficulties at some stage in their lives. Day for Life – the day in the Church's year dedicated to celebrating the sacredness of life – will focus this year on the theme of mental health. It will help raise awareness of the needs of those affected by mental ill-health, their friends, their family and their carers, and the support that the parish community can bring.

#### **Christ is very close to the broken-hearted**

Jesus comes to bring sight to the blind and light to those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death. Much of Jesus' earthly ministry was to those who were oppressed by mental illness. Increasingly it is understood that spirituality has an important role in healing; people in distress can find a renewed purpose and meaning in their lives when they recognise how much they are valued in the eyes of God the Father. While Christian faith does not offer an instant cure to mental illness, it can mark the beginning of a journey of healing. Christ brings those living on the margins of society back into the heart of the community.

#### **Understanding mental health problems**

There is no true health without mental health. Good mental health helps us to enjoy life and to face the disappointments, pain and sadness which we will all inevitably experience at some stage in our lives. Illness is generally a time of spiritual need and very often challenges us in our faith, our hope and our love. It takes great courage to be able to appreciate life in the midst of human suffering. The experience of mental illness is particularly distressing as it may deprive someone of the ability to direct their own lives.

#### **So what can parishes do?**

Both those who are affected by mental illness and their carers often experience isolation and rejection. The person in your parish community who may be suffering today is the young mum with post-natal depression, the local businessman with stress, your own parish priest, the man who has recently lost his wife to cancer or the young person who has lost faith in life, as well as someone with an obvious, severe and enduring mental illness. Offering the hand of friendship is a crucial step towards a person's recovery. We need to be able to acknowledge and talk about mental health problems and be able to invite people into our communities, especially those who are frequently left on the margins. We all need a willingness to listen, to be open and not fearful of what someone might say or do.

The majority of people with a mental illness get better or learn to manage their symptoms in daily life. The parish community has a very important role to play in accompanying people as they journey towards recovery.

#### **Practical Actions**

##### *Home-centred care*

- Offer a listening ministry
- Ensure that the Eucharist is brought to those who are housebound or in hospital
- Pray
- Find out how the parish can help, no matter how small the need is: 'Someone walked to Mass with me every day'

##### *Parish-centred care*

- Welcome and, where appropriate, involve those with mental health difficulties at the Sunday liturgy
- Mention those oppressed by mental illness and their carers in the prayers of intercession
- Arrange spiritual support for those affected and their carers
- Recognise the contribution of Catholic doctors, nurses and chaplains

##### *Community-focused care*

- Keep our churches open as much as possible as places of prayer and of peace
- Encourage community groups to use church facilities for meetings
- Build positive links with mental health services
- Link with other Christian denominations and other faiths