

October 2026

PRAYING WITH *the Holy Father*

Monthly Resource

for small group gatherings or classroom use



Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network
UNITED STATES APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

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For mental health ministry

Opening Prayer

- Begin with the Sign of the Cross
- Prayer: The Daily Offering



Good Father, I know you are with me. Here I am on this new day. Place my heart once more with the Heart of your Son Jesus, who gives himself for me and who comes to me in the Eucharist. May your Holy Spirit make me his friend and apostle, available for his mission of compassion.

I place in your hands my joys and hopes, my works and sufferings, everything that I am and have, in communion with my brothers and sisters of this Worldwide Prayer Network.

With Mary, I offer you my day for the mission of the Church and for the prayer intentions of the Pope and my Bishop for this month. Amen.

Introduce Intention

The Holy Father's October 2026 Intention

Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.

The Pope Video

- Pray with the Pope as he leads us through a prayer for the monthly intention.
- The video is available at <https://www.popesprayer.va/praywiththepope/>

Reflection

Reflection by Dr. Kathie Erwin

Dr. Kathie Erwin is a Professor in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Divine Mercy University, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, National Certified Counselor, and author of six professional books. She was team leader for Green Cross Academy of Traumatology in Trinidad, India and Romania, She also served as a guest faculty member at University of Iceland and International Institute for Postgraduate Education in Ukraine.

In the Church where I grew up, these words are written over the altar: "Come to me all you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). I saw it many times, but it was not until my career as a Clinical Mental Health Counselor that I realized why this Scripture matters so much. I encounter people who have been rejected for their distress, labeled weak, and blamed for their emotional struggles. Tragically that rejection happens too often by "church people" who admonish, "If you had more faith, you would be ok" or "You have not prayed about it." Regardless of the specific slight the message is clear: "you are not spiritual enough for God to answer." Yet our gracious God gave us the ultimate 24/7 hotline to connect with him in prayer no matter what the need. Our challenge is to stop struggling and use it. Sure, our Can-Do culture encourages independence and responsibility which are important, but how much can we do in our human strength? Not always enough. There is no failure in doing your best, then letting God do the rest. As a professional counselor, I walk alongside people in their darkest hours. I remind each new Client that "God is the healer; I am just his helper." In that role, I have seen God "set a captive free" from a horrific past or destructive choices. When that blessed moment of freedom happens, I am privileged to be present for the miracle of a life revived. Mental Health Counseling is indeed a calling; it's also a ministry for those of us who work in his name.

Sacred Scripture

- 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God."

Saint Connection

St. Dymphna (7th Century)

- Saint Dymphna was born in Ireland in the seventh century and was secretly raised in the Christian faith by her mother, despite her father being a pagan king. Inspired by her faith, she dedicated her life completely to Christ through a vow of chastity.
- After the death of her mother, Saint Dymphna fled to present-day Belgium with her priest and companions to escape her father's sinful desire to marry her. She eventually settled in the town of Geel, which later became known for its care and compassion toward people suffering from mental illness.
- Saint Dymphna is known today as the patron saint of mental illness, anxiety, emotional suffering, and victims of abuse. Many Catholics pray for her intercession because of the peace, hope, and healing associated with her life and martyrdom.

Discussion Questions

- How does Jesus respond to people who are suffering emotionally, physically, or spiritually?
- What do you think people struggling with mental health need most from their community?
- How can we be a community that reflects both God's compassion and wisdom in caring for people experiencing mental health challenges?
- What gives you hope that the church can become a place where conversations about mental health are welcomed rather than feared?

Closing Prayer

- Prayer:

We pray for mental health ministry, that it may be established throughout the Church and that we may help overcome the stigma and discrimination experienced by those living with mental illness. We pray to love as Jesus loves and care for our brothers and sisters in their darkest moments. May we be a beacon of light, reminding them that they are seen and that the Father desires healing and hope for us all.

- End with the Sign of the Cross