



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Rockford

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September 14, 2022

Dear Monsignor/Father,

Many of you may already be aware of the work Catholic Charities has been doing collaborating with parishes to establish and support Catholic mental health ministries in our diocese. This work has been made possible in part by grant funding and support from the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers (<https://catholicmhm.org/>). Drawing on a wealth of emerging resources to equip Catholic parishes to respond more effectively to individuals and families who contend with mental health challenges in our parishes, this collaboration hopes to foster the growth of parish mental health ministries.

Depending on the parish's need, these ministry teams will work to provide education, training and support to clergy, parish staff, lay ministers and the faithful. Working to reduce stigma by increasing awareness and understanding, parish mental health ministry teams will offer spiritual support and companionship for individuals and families, encourage linkage with local professional services, and foster and assure fuller participation in the faith life of the community. To this end, Catholic Charities has employed a Mental Health Ministry Coordinator to guide and support parishes in the Rockford Diocese in starting and sustaining mental health ministries.

The increase of mental health problems in our society as a whole and in our parishes and schools is alarming and calls for our pastoral attention and care. Mental health challenges can be as devastating to a person's faith life as they are to their psychological, social, and familial well-being. And while a wide array of treatment resources and interventions have been developed to facilitate recovery, we cannot forget the treasures we possess in Christ, his Church, his sacraments, and his saints for fostering healing, recovery, strength, and hope in these difficulties.

In the mystery of his passion and death, Christ showed his compassion and solidarity for the depths so often experienced by those with mental illness and addictions, depths of anguish, isolation, abandonment, unjust judgment, betrayal, pain, and fear. It is with these needs in mind that Catholic Mental Health Ministry seeks to equip parishes to minister to our brothers and sisters living with mental health challenges.

I ask you to reflect prayerfully and consider how your parish might benefit from collaboration with this Catholic Charities program. A variety of training and other resources are available and can be scheduled in your area by contacting CMHM coordinator Mary Fuller at maryfuller@rockforddiocese.org or 815-520-7549. I also ask each of you to consider your own creative talents, expertise, and ability to contribute more fully to ways we can address these challenges to show, give and be the love of Christ to those contending with these challenges.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford