

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK ON MENTAL ILLNESS

The National Catholic Partnership on Disability sets forth the following framework as a guide to the Church's ministry for and with people with mental illness:

HUMAN LIFE IS SACRED. EVERY PERSON IS CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE.

“One of the fundamental truths of Christian belief is that each human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). The Catholic Church unconditionally embraces and faithfully proclaims this truth. It is the foundation for human dignity. Our commitment to this truth is measured through actions on behalf of the vulnerable and alienated in society, especially the poor and suffering.” *Affirming the Dignity of the Mentally Ill, Nebraska Bishop's Conference, January 2005*

SINCE ALL PEOPLE ARE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, THEIR DIGNITY AND WORTH CANNOT BE DIMINISHED BY ANY CONDITION INCLUDING MENTAL ILLNESS.

"Whoever suffers from mental illness 'always' bears God's image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they 'always' have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such." *Pope John Paul II, International Conference for Health Care Workers, on Illnesses of the Human Mind, November 30, 1996*

SUFFERING IS REDEMPTIVE WHEN UNITED TO CHRIST.

“Those who share in the sufferings of Christ are also called, through their own sufferings, to share in (eschatological) glory.” *Salvifices Doloris, p22, Apostolic Letter from John Paul II, July 15, 1999*

WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST.

“The great strength of community is the uniqueness and giftedness of each member. The more each person uses their gifts, the stronger the community and the richer the relationships in that community. People are liberated if and when they use their gifts. People are imprisoned when they are prohibited or not enabled to use their gifts. Parishes are communities with great potential to receive and nurture the giftedness of people with disability. The Christian community is one in which all people can claim an equal place and contribute through presence and action.” *A pastoral document for parishes, Bishops' Committee For The Family And For Life, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference 2004*

"It is everyone's duty to make an active response; our actions must show that mental illness does not create insurmountable distances, nor prevent relations of true Christian charity with those who are its victims. Indeed it should inspire a particularly attentive attitude..." *Pope John Paul II, International Conference for Health Care Workers, on Illnesses of the Human Mind, February 11, 1984*

**THE WORD OF GOD AFFIRMS THE DIGNITY OF ALL PEOPLE.
INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE
CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL ILLNESS.**

“.....To interpret sacred scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and what God wanted to reveal to us by their words. In order to discover the sacred author’s intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current.....” *Catechism of the Catholic Church #109, 110*



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National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)

415 Michigan Avenue, N.E., Suite 95

Washington, DC 20017-4501

202-529-2933/ Fax:202-529-4678/ TTY:202-529-2934