

# Healing Wounds and Warming Hearts!

Pope Francis

Supporting people with mental illness in your parish.



Disability Projects Office [www.catholic.org.au/disability](http://www.catholic.org.au/disability)  
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### **Be a friend:**

Look at ways the parish can provide friendship and companionship to people with mental illness and support to their families.



### **Compassionate Listening and Referral:**

Clergy and parish leaders listen with compassion and refer to professional services as needed. Provide a follow up call or visit after referral.

### **Use People First Language:**

Promote the dignity of the individual. God loves us each as we are. Use "people first language" e.g., phrases like "people with a mental illness" rather than "the mentally ill." No one wants to be known as a disease.



### **Prayers of the Faithful:**

Include prayers for people with mental illness, their families and all people who support them

### **Homilies:**

Include references to persons with mental illnesses and their families and support people in homilies.

### **Hospital Visits:**

Ministry leaders visit those hospitalised with mental illness.





### **Social Justice Groups:**

Give the peace and justice ministry the opportunity to get involved in the systemic problems that affect persons with mental illness. At least one half of the prison population suffers with mental illness and at least one third of the homeless population suffers with mental illness.



### **Legislative Advocacy:**

Faith Communities can write letters and/or advocate directly with their elected officials to bring about justice to these inequities. Mental illness and the legislative process is a Faith Community issue since it deals with justice and compassion for people in need.



### **Housing and Jobs:**

Faith Communities can encourage their members to help find jobs and places to live for persons with mental illness.

### **Church Bulletins:**

Publicise the issues of mental health in the church bulletin or newsletter through a series of short articles on the subject.



### **Healing Prayer Services:**

Healing prayer and services, e.g. Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, for illnesses should include mental illnesses.



### **Speakers Available for Parish Groups:**

The topic of mental illness should be encouraged as subject matter for one of their meetings. Speakers could be from the medical community, mental health field, or advocacy groups.



### **Peer to Peer ministry:**

Peer to Peer ministry is an important outreach for persons suffering with major mental illness. People with mental illness often do not have a circle of friends that care for them. An important element to recovery and healing is a caring community.



### **Annual Liturgical Celebration:**

Network within your vicariate or with other Faith Communities in the area, and have an annual liturgical celebration of the lives of persons with a mental illness, their families, and mental health workers/professionals.