

# Pastoral Care for Mental Health Newsletter

No 3: March 2008

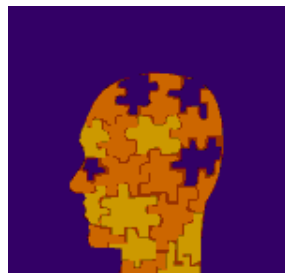


Supporting Mental Health within the Catholic Community of England and Wales

## Families, Mental Health and Pastoral Care: Conference October 2007

This being the first newsletter since our tremendously successful conference, a big thank you to all those who attended. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, indicating that the day was an involving, thought provoking experience for all. We were fortunate in the input from our keynote speakers, Julia Head, Chris Danes and Edna Hunneysett and in the quality of the workshops and those attending the day.

The day began with Julia Head asking us to consider our prejudices. "What have we learned? What have we been socialised into thinking about this? Where does it come from? And who has it?" she challenged. "There is a notion



**"Sometimes it feels like there are pieces missing"**

that there are a lot of people out there who are mentally and emotionally disturbed but not me." This sentiment was shared by many on the floor, and echoed by two Catholic people who shared their personal experiences of mental health difficulties.

Christopher Danes pointed to Luke 8:23-39 where Jesus heals a man with demons to call for greater support and pastoral care within the church community for those suffering with often overlooked debilitating illnesses.

You can read a full report of the day on <http://www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/mentalhealthday>

Richard Allen of the Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health, who led the befriending workshop, has also described his experience in the January edition of the APCMH journal *Being Alongside*.

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## Looking Forward

The October Conference was encouraging, but our priority is still to get the message out to the parishes, so it was encouraging that several dioceses were considering a local follow up. So far, we know of two diocesan conferences.

**Cardiff:** The Archdiocese of Cardiff arranged a day of reflection on Mental Health at Llantarnam Abbey on February 24. 21 people attended including people with mental health difficulties, carers and professionals. Edna Hunneysett spoke about her experience as a carer and there was powerful sharing of experience in groups. The organisers had gathered a wide range of helpful material. Cardiff's next step is to start a carers' group.

**Hallam:** The diocese of Hallam have planned a day called **Making Everybody Welcome, Families, Mental health and Pastoral Care in the Catholic Community** on Saturday April 12<sup>th</sup> at St Wilfrid's Centre, Sheffield – Contact Diocese of Hallam Caring Services, 524 Queens Road, Sheffield S2 4DT .

## Letter from the Editor



*Dear Friends,*

Thank you for all your e-mails, before and after our October conference (see below). It was great to meet some of you there for the first time and to begin the work of changing hearts and informing minds within the Catholic community. Day for Life 2008 will give us another opportunity within the Church and there are exciting initiatives in society as well.

The national campaign, Moving People, has been developed by a coalition of mental health charities including MIND and Rethink to challenge the stigma of mental health problems. As mental health professionals focus on recovery, it is clear to me that for many who are recovering, the opportunity to work and play a full part in society, is vital **but** that prejudice and discrimination remain serious problems. It is discouraging, even heartbreaking, to know that you can work but not be given the opportunity. Fortunately, there are now more agencies and charities working to place people who are coping with mental health difficulties in positions where they can work and flourish.

We tend to think of carers as parents or partners, but I have met brothers and sisters who are primary carers for a sibling with severe mental health difficulties and the needs of siblings have had little attention. They may have not only struggle to care for their brother/sister but also live with a fear that they too may develop similar problems. In November, Rethink launched their siblings website and it had thousands of contacts in the first couple of months. Go to [www.rethink.org/siblings](http://www.rethink.org/siblings).

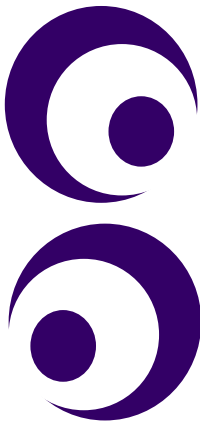
For many who experience mental health difficulties and their families, God can seem very far away and their faith be challenged at the depths of their being. Over the page, I review a book by an American Episcopalian priest who describes her personal struggle with bi-polar disorder, as well as an informative and practical book about schizophrenia. If you know of helpful books, please do let me know.

*Roberta Canning*

## WWW.DAYFORLIFE.ORG

Many of you will know that the Bishops of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland join every year to send a teaching message to all parish communities. This year the theme will be on mental health. It is wonderful news that they will be seeking to help form a more respectful understanding and sensitive culture in our parishes and we would like to help by gathering first person stories of the experience of people with mental health difficulties. Some of us have found love, support and understanding, but as the accounts of people who came to the October Day told us, others' experience has been not as good.

Our hope is to put some stories on to the [www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/mental-health](http://www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/mental-health) page so that others can learn from them. So, if you have a story to tell or know someone else who has, whether it is positive or less so, please do send it to me by April 30th. We will not use names on the web.



## Resources And Contacts

### MIND (National Association for Mental Health)

Mind is the leading mental health charity in England and Wales. They aim to challenge discrimination and prejudice against sufferers of mental health problems and their families, promoting inclusion through influence of policy and education. Their website is [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk). They also have a Welsh language page.

- MIND operate an info-line Monday to Friday 9.15am to 5.15pm where you can access information on different types of mental distress, places to get help, alternative therapies and advocacy. Contact them on 0845 766 0163. Please note they cannot provide an ongoing support service.
- You can also contact MIND by email on [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk) or letter at MIND, Po Box 277, Manchester, M69 3XN

### Rethink

Rethink works to help people with severe mental health difficulties recover a better quality of life. They aim to provide practical services of support, information and empowerment and help over 48,000 people each year. Rethink run support groups for sufferers, friends and families at locations across the UK, and can also provide a wide range of leaflets, books and other advisory material. Rethink are also unique in their ability to provide advice and information for more specific groups of people affected by mental health problems including siblings of sufferers and ethnic minorities.

For more information check the website at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

### Spirituality and Psychology

Therapists have been trained to deal with many varied manifestations of the mind, but religious and spiritual anxieties and concerns have traditionally belonged the domain of pastoral care and ministry. Nevertheless, a therapist will often encounter such concerns amongst patients in their work, and may be unsure how to form an effective response.

'Working Psychotherapeutically With the Patient's Spiritual Issues' is a two day series of conferences and workshops put together to address these issues. The focus will be on enabling the therapist to identify a spiritual or religious narrative in the consulting room and exploring the links between psychology and spirituality. Other themes include the role of Islamic spirituality in therapy, encouraging spirituality as an aid to recovery and using spirituality as an analytic tool. There will also be chances to practice yoga, meditation and dream therapy. The day will take place on **Friday 30th May and Saturday 31st May** in London. For more information or to book a place contact Confer at [www.confer.uk.com](http://www.confer.uk.com) or call them on 01728 689090.

**'Psychotherapists need to be able to distinguish healthy from unhealthy spirituality without pathologizing clients' faith and experiences.'**

**David Lukoff**

### 20% Off EVERYTHING At Mental Health Shop

Until the 31st of March the Mental Health Shop online will be offering a 20% discount off all its products. Simply enter the code P0069 when you come to the checkout and the discount will be deducted.

The online store carries a wide range of resources to use both at home and in education or the workplace. Their products include leaflets, DVDs, booklets and videos, and the website is handily arranged into sections of interest such as young and old people, discrimination, rights and the law, personal experiences, caring and treatment alongside others. The company tries to be as fully representative as possible of the range of mental health issues, and the site can also offer materials in other languages. The shop is based in Kingston, Surrey and the website can be found at [www.mentalhealthshop.org](http://www.mentalhealthshop.org). You can also order over the telephone on 0845 456 0455.



**'Learn to take the first step, even if you can't see the whole of the ladder'**



## Book Review

### **Your Guide to Schizophrenia**

*by Dr Adrienne Reveley published by Hodder Arnold at £9.99 ISBN 978-0-340-92747-2*

This book is published in partnership with the Royal Society of Medicine and is endorsed by Rethink (The National Schizophrenia Fellowship). It is informative and clearly written. It dispels many of the myths about schizophrenia and will be invaluable for carers and family members of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Dr Reveley gives useful information about medication and other treatments and makes the reader feel that a diagnosis of schizophrenia is not the end of the world but the opportunity for effective help. She illustrates the book with many sensitive accounts of personal stories taken from her practice.

### **Darkness Is My Only Companion**

*by Kathryn Greene-McCreigh, published by Brazos Press ISBN 1-58743-175-0*

This is a brave and powerful account by an American Episcopalian priest and theologian of her experience of bi-polar disorder, of mania and of the depths of clinical depression. She describes becoming ill after the birth of her second child and the course of her illness, but she also relates her spiritual and theological struggle with the reality of mental illness (as she describes it) and seeks to make some kind of sense of mental suffering and the creative and redemptive love of God. She quotes widely from Scripture — especially Job and the psalms — and also uses poetry. I think that many people will understand better the particular problem mental illness can pose for the devout Christian. Some will undoubtedly find her reflections helpful and she writes movingly of her husband's love, and how he sustained her with faithful love through the worst of times. Indeed this account will strike chords with many couples who have struggled together with the severe mental health problems of one.

## Everybody's Welcome

Everybody's Welcome is the first stage in a three phase campaign within the Catholic community of England and Wales to support marriage and family life, established in response to families' expressed needs during Listening 2004.

Everyone's Welcome is supporting parish communities to become more friendly, more family-sensitive, and more welcoming of all, including those at their heart as well as on the margins.

Family-sensitive, welcoming and friendly parishes are the foundation of the Church's care for marriage and family life as well as for the next two stages of the Celebrating Family initiative: Home is a Holy Place (2007) and Passing on the Faith (2008)

Pastors, parish groups, organisations, families and individuals are invited to use any of the resources on the Everybody's Welcome website, to adapt them to local situations and to share their experiences.



#### Contact:

Marriage & Family Life Project Office.  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England  
and Wales  
39 Eccleston Square  
London SW1V 1BX

**Everybody's Welcome 2008**

**[www.everybodyswelcome.org.  
uk/mentalhealth.html](http://www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk/mentalhealth.html)**

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