

Catholic mental health initiatives launch on St. Dymphna's feast day.

Tradition holds that after her mother's death, St. Dymphna's father's mental health declined dramatically, leading to her martyrdom.

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By Amira Abuzeid. May 15, 2026, at 1:26 PM

On the Feast of St. Dymphna, patroness of those suffering from nervous and mental afflictions, Catholic mental health organizations are launching new initiatives focused on psychological and spiritual healing. The Catholic Psychotherapy Association (CPA) is encouraging its members worldwide to request a diocesan-wide Mass intention this weekend (May 15–17) for individuals struggling with mental illness and for the mental health professionals who serve them. Dr. Terry Braciszewski, CPA president-elect, told EWTN News that during May — observed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as Mental Health Awareness Month — he hopes to “bring hope to those afflicted with mental illnesses and awareness to the wonderful Catholic professionals that can help them.”

Braciszewski noted the growing number of Catholics experiencing mental health challenges and their increased vulnerability to spiritual attacks. Quoting the St. Michael prayer, he acknowledged that “the evil one is prowling about the world seeking the ruin of souls,” but added, “there’s hope.” The association, which now has more than 600 members globally, aims to support mental health practitioners who integrate psychological practice with full fidelity to Catholic teaching on the human person.

Separately, Catholic psychologist Dr. Greg Bottaro of the CatholicPsych Institute has launched a nine-day Pentecost Novena for Healing, centred on a newly composed Litany for Mental Health. The novena runs from May 15 to May 23 and concludes on Pentecost Sunday, May 24.

Bottaro told EWTN News he hopes the initiative will help Catholics and others to bring their struggles directly to God.

“The world needs the truth our faith has to offer, and we need to learn how to speak better to the needs of the world,” he said. “If we can pray in the language of today’s needs, we can open to deeper healing for both ourselves and the world that is far from the faith.”

The litany names common fears, lies people live by (such as the need to earn love or that control equals safety), and clinical issues including anxiety, depression, compulsion, scrupulosity, and trauma.

Bottaro hopes praying it will “bring a wave of healing to thousands of people around the world.”

St. Dymphna, patroness of those suffering from mental illness.

St. Dymphna, a 7th-century Irish martyr, is one of the best-known patrons of mental illness.

When she was fourteen, she consecrated herself to Christ and took a vow of chastity. Tradition holds that after her Christian mother’s death, her pagan father’s mental health declined dramatically, and he sought to marry her. She fled to Belgium, where he eventually found her and she was martyred around age 15.

Miraculous healings attributed to her intercession led to her canonization in 1247 and the development of a major shrine and healing tradition in Geel, Belgium.