

CATHOLIC CHAPLAINCY TO THE LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITIES

The University Church of St Philip Neri Church ~ "The Oratory Church"
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Seventh Week of Easter



"With one heart, all these joined constantly in prayer...(Acts 1:14)"

Streamed Masses from the Chaplaincy this week:

- Tuesday 26th at 6pm (Feast of St Philip Neri)
- Thursday 28th May 6pm followed by Adoration till 7pm;
- Sunday 31st May at 5pm

These are streamed live on the *St Philip Neri Church Facebook page*, and also at www.cathchap.org.uk

Please note that **next Sunday's Mass will be at 5pm, preceding our 'Zoom' social**

We now stream **Morning Prayer** from the Chaplaincy live at 9am on Tuesdays & Wednesdays (using the Universalis app, which follows the Divine Office)

This is the prayer of the whole Church together, prayed each day by the Pope, Bishops, clergy, religious and lay people throughout the world. It's a powerful way of being united with each other, even when physically separated. Join us!

There will be no YouCat session on Monday, on account of the Bank holiday.

Chaplaincy Summer Term Social on Zoom...

Sunday 31st May at 6pm

A chance to catch up with each other and celebrate an extraordinary academic year! Archbishop McMahon will be joining us for part of the Meeting...

Tuesday is the

Feast of St Philip Neri

so there will be Mass streamed from our beautiful church at 6pm. This year is the centenary of its opening. This is the mosaic which would normally be in the oval shaped space high over the sanctuary of our church. At the moment it is in the crypt of our church, awaiting restoration and replacement.



Looking for Mass or other services online? Here's a great resource. Its an ecumenical site, linking to Churches of all denominations from round the country, including Catholic churches:

<https://www.churchservices.tv/country/england/>

In Liverpool several churches have started streaming Mass, including the Metropolitan Cathedral, St Anne's and St Vincent's. See liverpoolcatholic.org.uk for a full list.

"Isolated but not Alone..."

An online directory of resources for use during the Covid-19 pandemic. Updated daily with links to live-streamed Masses, tips on how to survive in self-isolation, special prayers for the crisis and information and advice on where to find online counselling and support groups:

www.thetablet.co.uk/coronaahelp

St Philip Neri – a saint for our time

“St Philip Neri is the patron saint of joy, and with this in mind, he could become a powerful intercessor for people who have periods of feeling down. We pray a lot to St Valentine and St Raphael – so that these saints may find us romantic partners who will love us. But we might do well to pray to St Philip Neri that he inspires us with the ability to cherish others and to be filled with the joy of love... Perhaps most acutely for our selfie age, he could become an intercessor for people who agonise over how they look, who spend all their free time finding flattering selfies to post on Facebook and fear that that narcissism is beginning to rule their lives. [From the Catholic Herald, May 26th 2015]”



Understanding Mental Health from the perspective of our Catholic Faith

I was recently asked to write an article about Mental Health from a Catholic perspective, and given the coincidence of Mental Health Awareness Week and the Feast of St Philip Neri, I thought I might share it with you...

Traditionally, mental health issues were something people preferred not to speak about – a subject that made us uncomfortable. Fortunately this is changing and the whole area has received a lot of media attention recently. The causes of mental health problems can be various. Some people suffer greatly in this area; others less so. But all of us experience some emotional or mental distress at some time or another, so its something that is

relevant to us all. We recognise that we have a responsibility to look after our physical health, but we should recognise equally that we have to look after our mental health too.

How do we relate to the world of mental health as Catholics? Our Catholic faith – properly understood -has a lot to tell us about mental health issues, and much that can be of help. I say ‘properly understood’ because when religious faith is imperfectly communicated or understood, it can be a hindrance and not a help to our psychological wellbeing! Many people, for instance, see God as a threatening figure, just waiting to catch them out and punish them. That’s sad; it’s also false. When our faith is properly understood, though, it can be an invaluable resource, in several ways.

Our faith gives us a sense of perspective as to who we are, and where our lives fit into the great scheme of things. Indeed, in our “post-modern” world where many no longer believe that there is any “great scheme” to reality, we dare to proclaim differently. We recognise that we are made by God, in his image; limited, but with fantastic capacities - most of all, the ability to love. We are part of His plan: our lives have a purpose, a *vocation*. Each of us has to discern the particular ways in which we live out that call: is it as a married person and parent, religious, deacon or priest? What is our professional calling? Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl (1905-97), a survivor of Auschwitz, proposed that in order to live well, we have to find meaning in our lives. If we loose meaning, our lives become empty, and we loose drive. Frankl found that people who had a strong sense of meaning were able to endure great adversity. Recognising our vocation – that we were created for a purpose – is a powerful help in this.

At this present time, in the midst of a global pandemic, many people fear for the future, and for their livelihood. Many have lost loved ones: spouses, parents, friends. Our sense of meaning can seem very fragile at times like this. I don’t want to

sound as if I'm giving glib answers, yet countless people through the centuries have found in their faith the encouragement and resources to live through really dark times – even if its just the consolation of finding Bible characters who have lived through something similar, and perhaps ask the same questions as we do.

Our faith, then, can help us to make sense of challenges and problems. None of us escape suffering, either physical or mental. Among the most common mental health problems in our society are depression and anxiety. They become “clinical” problems when they are so great that they inhibit a person’s normal day to day functioning. That’s when seeking professional help is important. Yet some amount of depression is part of human life. Dr Scott Peck in *The Road less Travelled* (Arrow books, 1990) claimed that depression is an inevitable reaction to loss or big change. Life brings many changes and losses, and to live – and to grow in holiness – means being prepared to experience the discomfort of “letting go.” The good news is that we put up with that discomfort for the greater good of becoming the people God calls us to be – and ultimately, being together with Him in the afterlife. Jesus promised that anything we give up for his sake will be abundantly repaid (Mk 10:29). Some degree of anxiety too is part of being human. Existentialist philosophers point out that its the result of having free will. Again its important to stress that when it gets out of hand, we ought to seek professional help.

We live in a society which has been profoundly affected by the rise of psychology and the therapeutic. These have been great gifts, and countless people have been helped to live better and happier lives as a result. Yet perhaps it has also fed into the “postmodern” dream: that we have an entitlement to the good life, and we should pursue its pleasures as the goal of life. In this mindset, anything that hurts or makes us unhappy is an affront. The wisdom of the Gospel is very different: it tells us that some things are only achieved

through being surrendered. Happiness will elude us when it is pursued for its own sake. It is achieved when we forget about own desires, and give ourselves to the service of others.

As a counsellor myself, I believe in the healing that can come about in the therapeutic encounter. Yet the therapeutic cannot replace the wisdom of the Gospel, and has in fact something to learn from it.

When should we seek help? www.mind.org.uk has some excellent resources and suggestions for help, and poses exactly that question. It suggests that if you are worrying more than usual, finding it hard to enjoy life, having thoughts and feelings that are hard to cope with, or just interested to find out more about support or treatment, it might be good to explore options. Going to your GP would be one starting point. She or he may suggest medication and/or counselling, or may have other ideas, depending on the issues you describe.

Occasionally, people who take their faith seriously find that mental health professionals may not “approve” of religion, or see it as some kind of hang-up that their clients need to get over. Fortunately this is less common than it used to be: many counsellors have come to recognise the great value faith can have. And as I noted above, sometimes distorted religious faith can be unhelpful. In general, though, you have every right to expect your counsellor to respect your faith, and help you to see it as a resource. This might be something to explore in the early stages of therapy before you agree to work together: what is your counsellor’s view of religion?

Seeking professional mental health support takes courage. It is not a sign of lack of faith, no more than seeking your doctor’s help for a physical ailment is. Together with our faith, it can lead to greater wholeness and freedom – which is what God wants for all of us.

