



Catholic Social Workers National Association

April 2007

Letter from the President:

CSWNA will soon be celebrating its one-year anniversary. We have had many challenges over the past year, but have enjoyed many more successes. Over the past several months I have met with many people, some have embraced the association while others have not. Over the last year, the Board has had some transition; I would like to thank **Susan Leininger, Hollie Adams Severt & Joan Rangel** for their time, talent and commitment to CSWNA. CSWNA continues to move forward and answer the call of God to provide a professional association for Catholic Social Workers.

As Catholic Social Workers we have a great deal of responsibility to our clients and/or students. Catholic Social Workers are called to care for the poor and the poor of spirit. They work with those who abuse, and are abused as well as who have been neglected in body, mind, or spirit. They advocate for the youngest of the young, in their mothers wombs and the elderly, the sick and dying until Jesus calls them home. Catholic Social Workers humbly walk with their clients through life's joys and challenges, living out Jesus command to love and follow his example in washing the feet of our fellow man.

I pray each one of you embrace the gift that you have been given and never stop advocating for your clients or students. As Catholic Social Workers, we live our lives in service to God and God is who we will answer to when our time on earth is finished. Never be ashamed or afraid to help your clients or students discover/rediscover God in their life. After all, that is the greatest gift we could ever give anyone.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, cause of our joy, pray for us.

Kathleen Neher

Kathleen Neher, MSW, LSW, President/CEO

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The Gift of Prayer

By Laura Guzzi

"The Divine has no body
on earth but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through
which the Divine
compassion is to look
out to the world
Yours are the feet with
which he is to go about
doing good;
Yours are the hands with
which he is to bless men now."



- St. Teresa of Avila

I recently ran across this quote and was reminded of the many opportunities we are offered each day to live out our own faith. As a social worker in a Catholic Health Care Facility, I am often grateful for the many occasions that arise for me to live out my values. This is easier said than done on some days as large patient loads and limited extended family support make caring for the sick both a challenge and a privilege.

How often do we allow ourselves to hear the voice of God, let alone offer ourselves as his hands or feet? Talking with a patient recently; she asked how I came to be a social worker. What was it about social work that called to me, she asked. The opportunity to be of service to others, while perhaps a cliché reply, was as much a part of my Catholic upbringing as mass on Sunday. But as I thought more about her question I was struck by the thought that one gift I am afforded is the reliance on a power so much greater than myself. When all else fails and our frailties are exposed, it is the gift of prayer that we can share together. This, I said, is what drew me to social work.

Recently I was invited to share a few days in retreat at a provincial house in southern Indiana. What struck me most about my time there was the joy that abounded from the nuns and their staff. Each of them had a

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St. Dymphna

St. Dymphna is the patron saint of mental health caregivers, mental health professionals, the mentally ill, and rape victims.

Dymphna — the daughter of a

pagan king of Ireland — became a Christian and was secretly baptized. At the age of 14, after the death of her mother, who was of extraordinary beauty, her father who had been afflicted with a mental illness brought on by his grief, desired to marry his own daughter, who was just as beautiful, but she fled with from her castle together with St. Gerebernus, her confessor and two other friends and landed at Antwerp.

Her father, Damon found them in Belgium. He gave orders that the priest's head be cut off. Then Damon tried to persuade his daughter to return to Ireland with him. When she refused, he drew his sword and struck off her head. She was then only fifteen years of age.

Dymphna received the crown of martyrdom in defense of her purity about the year 620. She is the patron of those suffering from nervous and mental afflictions. Many miracles have taken place at her shrine, built on the spot where she was buried in Gheel, Belgium. The site where she died is known for its miraculous healings of the insane and possessed. There is now a well-known institution on the site, and her relics are reported to cure insanity and epilepsy.

Lord, our God, you graciously chose Saint Dymphna as patroness of those afflicted with mental and nervous disorders. She is thus an inspiration and a symbol of charity to the thousands who ask her intercession.

Please grant, Lord, through the prayers of this pure youthful martyr, relief and consolation to all suffering such trials, and especially those for whom we pray. (Here mention those for whom you wish to pray).

We beg you, Lord, to hear the prayers of Saint Dymphna on our behalf. Grant all those for whom we pray patience in their sufferings and resignation to your divine will. Please fill them with hope, and grant them the relief and cure they so much desire.

We ask this through Christ our Lord who suffered agony in the garden. Amen

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The Gift of Prayer

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unique calling; a path that was unlike none of their sister's. Their shared calling brought them great joy in being able to be of service to their God.

As social workers we often work with our clients at their worst. Helping them identify their strengths is a cornerstone of our profession. Reminding them that they are not alone is a most powerful gift.

As our world encourages us to move faster it can become a challenge to make time to quiet ourselves and hear the voice of God within. As you are working to take care of others, take care to give yourself the gift of time in prayer. For prayer is not just a tool of last resort, but an offering of mindfulness that not only brings us closer to our God, but allows us the privilege of being his hands and feet in world that calls out for the grace only he can give.

Mission Statement:

The mission of
Catholic Social Workers National Association
is to promote the implementation
of Catholic Social Teachings in
social work practice as we support
competent professional social workers
living out their baptismal call
by being the hands and feet of Christ.

Choosing a Marital Therapist

By Donald R. Gatwood, MSW, LCSW, LMFT

The other day I had the opportunity to meet with a woman who eleven years ago, at the suggestion of her therapist, decided to end her marriage. She presently anguishes over whether she made the right choice.

It never ceases to amaze me that so many people decide to end their marriages without considering the true consequences of such a decision. The decision of whether to divorce or not is probably one of the most important decisions anyone will ever make. Yet, the fact remains that only a minority of people in the throes of marital problems consult marriage therapists who are in fact in line with the teachings of the Church, what alone the debilitating ramifications of divorce. Research suggests that among those who choose divorce, most indicate that five years out they are less happy with life than they were when they were married. Likewise, the children of divorce are less likely to fare than those who remain in a married family.

If most couples knew what I know regarding the decision to divorce, seeking professional advice for your marital problems is no guarantee things will improve. The truth be known, many people who have sought marriage counseling have found things to be much worse, and any ideas they might have regarding divorce being a solution are fueled by inexperienced counselors who lack an understanding of the sanctity of marriage. Most therapists are well-meaning, but not



always qualified to do marital therapy. That's why I want to offer some guidelines for consideration should you seek professional help to improve your marriage:

Make sure your therapist has received specific training and is experienced in marital therapy. Too often, therapists say they do couples therapy or marital therapy if they have two people sitting in the office. This is incorrect. Marital therapy requires very different skills than doing individual therapy. Marital counseling requires looking at the "We" versus looking at the "I" of things. It requires looking at what is going on between the couple versus focusing on individual issues. Couples therapists need to be about looking to what makes things work versus what isn't working. A therapist can be very skilled as an individual therapist and be clueless about helping couples change. Therefore, ask

your therapist about their training and experience. Are they trained in marriage counseling? Do they believe in the sanctity of marriage?

You should feel comfortable and respected by your therapist. You should feel that your therapist understands your perspective and feelings. If your therapist sides with you or your spouse, that's not good. No one should feel ganged up on. If you aren't comfortable with something your therapist is suggesting—like setting a deadline to make a decision about your marriage—say so. If your therapist honors your feedback, that's a good sign. If not, leave now.

The therapist's own values about relationships definitely play a part in what he or she does and is interested in when working with you. Since there are few universal rules for what works, if your therapist insists that there is only one way to have a successful marriage, find another therapist. Be certain that your therapist is in line with the teachings of your faith.

Although some people think that their therapist is able to tell when a person should stop trying to work on their marriage, therapists really don't have this sort of knowledge. If they say things like, "It seems that you are incompatible." You need to leave; find another therapist!

Make sure you and your spouse, along with your therapist, set concrete goals early on in therapy. If you don't, you will probably meet each week with no clear direction. One can go on forever

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Neighbor to Neighbor

“Give a man a fish and feed him for a day;
teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime.”

Neighbor to Neighbor is a faith-based program of personal change, designed and facilitated by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Evansville. This seven week faith-based course gives families the opportunity to move away from financial dependence on social service agencies and move toward self-sufficiency. Students attend class twice weekly for two and one-half hours each class. They take a close look at how they earn, spend and save money. Using their faith as strength, they learn how to make life goals that will help them grow toward a more positive and healthier future.

Neighbor to Neighbor students learn to see money in its broadest sense, and the effect it has on so many aspects of their life and the decisions they make. They begin to take steps to divorce themselves from the emotional hold money can have on the family. In the fourteen lessons, students

- learn to set and carry out goals,
- make a realistic household budget,
- learn to spot a “rip off”,
- learn to lead their family in determining priorities,
- get job interview, resume and employment tips,
- learn about empowering community resources, and
- use their faith in redeeming their financial behavior.

Neighbor to Neighbor is a class for working adults. It emphasizes employment as the only reliable manner in which to gain financial security. Under-employed or employable adults interview for the course and, if accepted, are allowed to miss no more than two classes. Each class follows a set agenda, beginning with relaxation techniques, followed by the daily lesson and wrapping up with relevant faith sharing topics. People of all faiths are welcome to apply. Caseworkers work with persons, who do not claim a particular faith, to find what is important in their life to move them forward.

The Neighbor to Neighbor program offers:

1. Financial assistance toward a bill that has been “holding them back.”
2. Caring, personal involvement, including one-on-one sessions with a caseworker.
3. Instruction with consideration to the individual’s whole person: body, mind and soul.
4. Fun, informative, encouraging classes.

Neighbor to Neighbor is different than any program currently being used. The class starts a step back from most financial classes. Facilitators are aware that some families need more support and encouragement in

order to get their financial affairs in order. Years of under-employment, generational poverty, and dependence on “the system” are all factors that keep many families from being motivated to change.

However, social service “help agencies” agree that the assistance dollars are harder than ever to come by. Working families need to be able to depend on their own income to pay the bills.

Each class flows with a certain theme throughout. Each class builds upon the last. Each homework assignment is an expansion of the last one. The routine of each class is an essential part of building habits, being comfortable with a schedule, and eliminating drama. Graduates report positive outcomes still affecting their lives a year after graduation (study completed in 2006 by University of Southern Indiana). New graduates leave class with more skills, more confidence, and more hope as they move forward, strengthened in body, mind and spirit.

For further information contact: Mr. James F. Collins, LCSW, Director for Catholic Charities of Evansville, jcollins@evansville-diocese.org, 1-812-423-5456, Catholic Charities, 123 NW 4th Street, Court Bldg. Suite 603, Evansville, IN 47708



Marital Therapist

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in therapy with no clear direction. Less is more; find a therapist who talks of sooner rather than later.

You can NOT re-do the past, if your therapist is focusing on the past, suggest a future-orientation. Stay in the here and now! If he or she isn’t willing to take your lead, find a therapist who will. The past does not determine who you are or can be. You determine your future.

Know that most marital problems are solvable. Don’t let your therapist tell you that change is impossible. The truth be known, there are more good times than bad. Human beings are amazing and they are capable of doing great things- especially for people they love.

Trust your instincts. If your therapist is helping, you’ll know it. If he or she isn’t, you’ll know that too. Insist on measurable results. They should be able to show you therapy is working. If not, leave.

Finally, be open to the Grace of God. Ask yourself: “What am I doing to make this work?” Pray, pray, pray.

For further information contact me at dgatwood@evansville-diocese.org