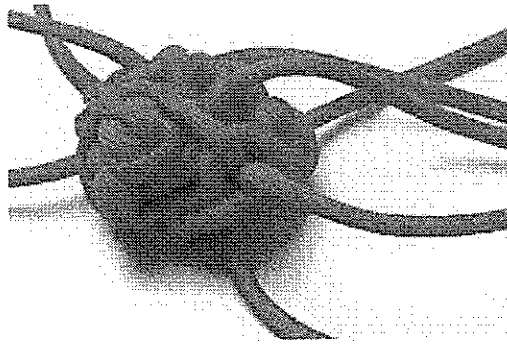


## Mental Illness Awareness Week Prayer Service



### *Mercy, Grace, Harmony: Unravelling the Knots*

October, 2015

*The symbol of a knotted string reminds us of our lives – yearning for God’s mercy, grace, and harmony. Each participant may be given this symbol as they enter church, or a visual image may be furnished. Persons participating via telephone may use a visual image or provide their own knotted string.*

**Hymn:** “Amazing Grace”

**Introduction:** Thank you for joining us in prayer. We gather to pray for those whose lives are affected by mental illness: family, friends, care and service providers, people in recovery, people who struggle with mental illness day to day. Together we ask for the grace of God to draw us closer to him, and to one another.

**Opening Prayer:** Let us join our voices together in an opening prayer, adapted from “*Rich in Mercy*,” (*Misericordia Vultis* #9 and #13), written by Pope Francis I for the International Year of Mercy, 2016.

*(The speakers may be alternated communally, e.g. “left and right side of the church,” “men and women,” etc.)*

**Speaker 1:** The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He desires our well-being and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful.

**Speaker 2:** Still our lives have their twists and turns, their knots and tangles. Some of those we love find it hard to live with challenges like mental illness, poverty, unemployment.

- Speaker 1: Just as God is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other, to support those whose challenges we may not understand, or threaten to overwhelm us.
- Speaker 2: In order to be capable of mercy, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God's mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.
- All or Presider: Heavenly Father, we know that in your loving mercy you have concern for each one of us, wanting each of us to be happy and full of joy and peace. Help us to follow your merciful example; as you love, so must we, your children. Just as you are merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other. May we listen to your Word not only with our ears and minds but in the silence of our hearts. Help us to reflect on your love and mercy so that we can include and practice it in our own lives. Amen.

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 58:6-11

Reflection: Our lives may sometimes seem like knots: tangled, tight, impossible to loosen. It is the grace and mercy of God that helps us unravel the confusion and find order and harmony. In calling for a Year of Mercy, Pope Francis invites us to draw near to God and to one another, and find God's mercy. Knotty problems that are painful and frustrating can be tackled within the loving grace of God, who tackles them with us. God's grace, St. Paul tells us, is sufficient, even with our weaknesses, distress, and difficulties (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). God's mercy leads us to harmony.

When we see a knotted string, we notice that it has parts that are straight, and parts that are tangled knots. In a moment of silence, let's loosen the knot, let it begin to disentangle. At the same time, ask for God's grace-filled mercy to help us unravel the knots in your own life, and pray for restored order and harmony.

**Intercessions:** *Bringing together all our needs and concerns, let us pray:*

Response: "Lord, hear our prayer"

For our Holy Father, Pope Francis, that he will lead the Church in ways that allow all to find God's mercy, especially those who struggle with mental illness, let us pray to the Lord.

For leaders of nations around the world, that they provide adequate and respectful care for their people in need of treatment, support, and recovery, let us pray to the Lord.

For our bishops, priests, deacons, and lay ministers entrusted with pastoral care for those affected by mental illness, that they may be a source of harmony and hope, let us pray to the Lord.

For families, friends, the medical community and service providers, that God will provide them with his blessings and graces each day, let us pray to the Lord.

For each person who has a diagnosis of mental illness, that he or she may feel the mercy of God and his loving concern each and every day, let us pray to the Lord.

And for those concerns we hold in the silence of our hearts ... Lord hear our prayer [*or invitation may be given for intercessions to be prayed aloud*]

*And now let us we join together in the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us ...*

#### **The Our Father**

**Closing Prayer:** Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila

Let nothing disturb you,  
Let nothing frighten you,  
All things are passing;  
God only is changeless.  
Patience gains all things  
Who has God wants nothing.  
God alone suffices.

**Blessing and Dismissal:**     *Members of the clergy may bless the people in the usual way.  
Laypersons may use this blessing.*

“Let us go now to our individual homes in the assurance of God’s love and His infinite understanding. Be well and may God bless each and every one of us.”

**Closing Hymn:** “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” [Charles Wesley. GIA, *Gather* (1994 edition) #622]