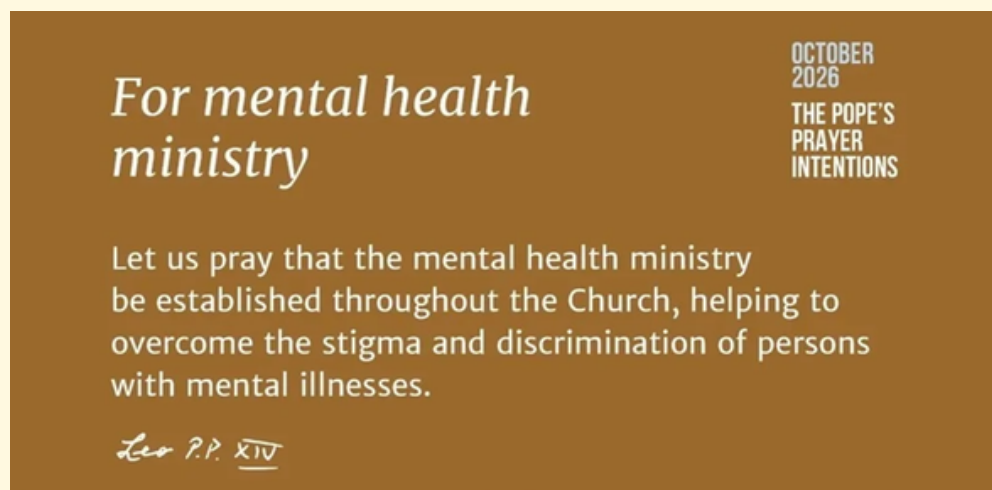


A Healing Presence: The Church's Call to Mental Health Ministry

9–10 October 2026 • Rome and Vatican City



PONTIFICIA | PRO
ACADEMIA | VITA

*Under Patronage of the
Pontifical Academy for Life*

Organizer:

International Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers (CMHM)

Participants:

Approximately 30–40 participants from across the continents, engaged in various settings of mental health ministry

Confirmed Bishops:

Bishop Borys Gudziak (Ukraine): Bishop Tesfasellassie Medhin (Ethiopia), Bishop John Dolan (USA), Bishop Victor Phalana (South Africa), Archbishop Thomas Jessayyan Netto (India), and Bishop Wismick Jean-Charles (Haiti), via Zoom

Occasion:

The gathering responds to two coinciding occasions: Pope Leo XIV's prayer intention for October 2026, dedicated to the pastoral care of mental health, and World Mental Health Day, observed annually on October 10.

Pope Leo XIV has designated October 2026 as the month in which the universal Church prays specifically for mental health ministry, asking that this ministry be established throughout the Church to overcome stigma and discrimination toward people with mental illness. The Church is called to become a place of welcome, understanding, and healing for those who suffer mentally and emotionally—not a place of judgment or silence. The event translates a spiritual intention into visible, pastoral, and clinical action.

Not a mental-health conference with a religious veneer, and not a purely devotional gathering, but a bridge event between clergy, lay pastoral workers, mental health clinicians, and people with lived experience.

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Organized by:



International Association
Catholic Mental
Health Ministers



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Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network



RSVP TODAY - registration link



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FRIDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2026

15:00 – 17:00

Sala Maria
Assunta
Complesso del Gesù
– Via degli Astalli,
17, Roma

Two-part panel discussion on mental health ministry, shaped by Pope Leo XIV's prayer intention for October 2026, with time reserved for audience questions.

Part I: Stigma, Welcome, and Safe Spaces: Bishop Borys Gudziak (Ukraine); Thomas Schulze, President, World Psychiatric Association (Germany); Samuelle Falk, Catholic psychiatrist and researcher (Sweden); Fr. Chilton Fernandez, Catholic priest and clinical psychologist (India); Wendell Callahan, psychologist and Executive Director, Catholic Institute for Mental Health Ministry (USA).

Part II: **Caregivers, Bridges, and Integration:** Sr. Grimaneza Guaya, clinical psychologist and consecrated woman of the Opera Mater Dei (Ecuador / Italy); Victor Pereira-Sanchez, psychiatrist (Spain / USA); Fr. Brian Duggan, priest and clinical psychologist (Canada); Márcio Gagliato, humanitarian and mental health specialist (Brazil).

17:10 – 17:40

Guided tour of the Rooms of St. Ignatius.

Complesso del
Gesù

18:00 – 19:00

Holy Mass

Chiesa del SS.
Nome di Gesù
all'Argentina –
Piazza del Gesù,
Roma

Mental health ministry is essential to integral human development and a universal human right.
Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development





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SATURDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2026

10:00 – 13:00

Opening prayers, led by Fr. Sandro Barlone, S.J., President of the Di Liegro Foundation

Visit to
Fondazione
Internazionale
Don Luigi Di
Liegro, Via
Ostiense 106,
Roma

State of mental illness among youth in Italian society, with particular attention to the younger population – Prof. Alessandro Vento, psychiatrist, President of the Observatory on Addiction

Testimonies from caregivers and patients about their experience.

Description of the Di Liegro Foundation's Mental Health Program – Gina Di Liegro, Secretary General, Di Liegro Foundation.

Light lunch.

14:30 – 16:00

Press conference — Carrying Out the Pope's Vision for Mental Health Ministry.

Sala Marconi,
Palazzo Pio

Welcome and Introduction — Deacon Ed Shoener, President, International Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers.

Overview of the Pope's Vision for Mental Health Ministry: Bishop John Dolan, Diocese of Phoenix, USA, and Chaplain of CMHM (via Zoom)

Francesco Draicchio, President Italian Chapter, Pope's Worldwide Prayer network

Mental Health Ministry in Action in Different Cultures Around the World:

- Ukraine — Bishop Borys Gudziak, Metropolitan Archbishop of Philadelphia of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and President, Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv (in person)
- South Africa — Bishop Victor Phalana, Diocese of Klerksdorp (via Zoom)
- India — Archbishop Thomas Jessayyan Netto, Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum, Kerala (via Zoom)
- Ethiopia — Bishop Tesfasellassie Medhin, Ethiopian Catholic Eparchy of Adigrat (via Zoom)
- Haiti — Bishop Wismick Jean-Charles, S.M.M., Auxiliary Bishop of Port-au-Prince (via Zoom)

Presentation of the video courses for Catholic communities on Basic Mental Health Literacy and Psychological First Aid

17:00 – 18:30

Rosary

Vatican
Gardens,
Lourdes Grotto

