

# INFORMED

THE FORMED NEWSLETTER FOR PASTORS AND PARISH LEADERS

## HOW CAN OUR PARISHES HELP THOSE HURTING?

May is Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States, reminding us that many of our fellow Catholics struggle with mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reports that one in five U.S. adults live with mental illness. In 2020, an estimated 52.9 million Americans, aged 18 or older, were contending with a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder. According to NIMH, the prevalence is higher among females than males—most prevalent in those aged 18 to 25 versus other age groups—and highest among adults who listed two or more races when reporting ethnic background.

What can our parishes do for those who live with mental illness?



FORMED offers *The Sanctuary Course for Catholics*, an eight-session course designed for small groups, which explores the realities

of mental health and illness, as well as the vital need for faith-based community conversations about these topics. A compelling film accompanies each session, featuring the stories

of Catholics who live with mental health challenges. Archbishops, theologians, and psychologists offer their perspectives.

Over the eight sessions, participants explore these topics: understanding mental health and illness; challenging stigma; the recovery journey; companionship; self-care; and the role of the community in mental health recovery.

*The Sanctuary Course for Catholics* is for anyone who wants to learn about faith and mental health. That might include people with questions about mental health, mental health professionals, leaders or religious educators who want to engage their communities in mental health conversations, people supporting loved ones with mental health challenges, and those living with mental health problems.

Course materials, including leader and participant guides, are available in English and Spanish. Discussion questions, group exercises, prayers, and reflection are also provided.

Those interested in running *The Sanctuary Course for Catholics* can click a link on [formed.org](https://formed.org) to read transcripts of all eight films, peruse promotional materials, and view a high-definition version of the course trailer.

# HIGHLIGHTS ON FORMED

## Where do we go after the glory of Easter?

After rejoicing throughout the season of Easter, many Catholics resolve to pursue a deeper faith and to reflect more brightly the Word of God.

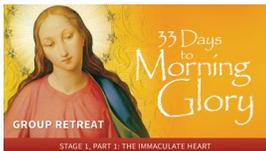
FORMED offers two programs to assist your parishioners on their journeys.



### *The Art of Living*

***The Art of Living*** is a six-part series based on Dr. Edward Sri's book *The Art of Living: The Cardinal Virtues and the Freedom to Love*.

Dr. Ben Akers welcomes Dr. Sri to discuss what virtue is, how to grow in the virtues, and how our ability to love is dependent on our pursuit of the virtuous life.



### *33 Days to Morning Glory*

***33 Days to Morning Glory*** is a mini-retreat for Catholics who want to get to know Mary better during May, the month dedicated to Our Lady.

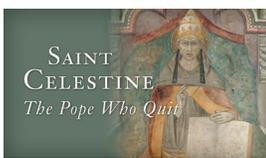
*33 Days to Morning Glory* gives individuals a quick and easy way to withdraw from the demands of daily life and enter into a peaceful interior reflection on their relationship with Christ in the context of Marian devotion.

Fr. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC, outlines the journey to Marian consecration, using four giants of Marian spirituality as guides: St. Louis de Montfort, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and Pope St. John Paul II.

Those who begin the 33 days on May 4 will finish on June 5—Pentecost Sunday this year and also the vigil of the Feast of Mary, the Mother of the Church!

# LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Enrich your parishioners' knowledge of and devotion to saints with May feast days with these resources on [formed.org](http://formed.org):



### May 19 Pope Saint Celestine V

***Saint Celestine: The Pope Who Quit*** tells the riveting story of Pope St. Celestine V, who retired from the papacy after a short reign. A hermit and founder of a religious order, Pietro Angelerio became pope in 1294. Shortly after, he resigned, abdicating the Chair of St. Peter.

Shot in Italy, this docudrama explores the deadly dealings, apocalyptic maneuverings, and papal intrigue that plagued Celestine's life.



### May 26 Saint Philip Neri

***Saint Philip Neri: I Prefer Heaven*** is an epic film on the famous sixteenth-century "Apostle of Rome." Though he hoped to join the Jesuits as a missionary, Neri instead was led to seek out the poor and abandoned youth in Rome, catechizing them and helping them find a better life.

The film highlights his great love for the youth, contagious joy, deep mystical spirituality, and gift for miracles that characterized the founder of the Oratory.



### May 30 Saint Joan of Arc

***Joan of Arc*** tells the story of the peasant French girl who hears the saints calling her to unite her country, eventually convincing the French king of her mission and leading an army into battle. Although she was captured and died at age 19, her legend shines brightly nearly six centuries later.

*These movies are intended for an adult audience. Parents should preview the films before sharing them with their children.*

# SPOTLIGHT ON THE SANCTUARY

Answering Christ's call to minister to the suffering has prompted parishes and dioceses to reach out to the many who experience mental health challenges.

While mental health has not traditionally been an area of ministry, the Church recognizes that mental health challenges have an impact on spiritual health, according to Bryana Russell, the engagement manager at Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries.

*The Sanctuary Course for Catholics*—available in English and Spanish—equips parishes to support parishioners' mental well-being.

The course is “for everyone,” Russell said—for those experiencing mental health challenges, for caregivers, and for those who recognize the need and want to accompany those struggling.

Today, we can “access the suffering of the world in just one click,” Russell said.

Isolation and constant bad news takes a toll, Russell explained. Mental health is a continuum—people go through periods when it flourishes and when it languishes. Some people also experience mental illness.

*The Sanctuary Course for Catholics* “gives parishes the tools to attend to mental well-being,” Russell said.

What Russell loves about the feedback she receives “is the warmth and inclusion that people living with mental health challenges receive from the Church.”

One person who contacted Russell had lost a loved one to suicide.

“The program gave her the freedom to speak about her loss, her grief, and her loved one's mental health challenges within the parish community,” Russell said.

“The community has a role to play for those living with and recovering from mental health challenges,” Russell said. “We need to step up.”

*The Sanctuary Course for Catholics* builds a foundation, opening doors for conversations about mental health. It offers “a sanctuary for those weathering life's storms,” Russell said.

To run the eight-week program, a parish needs only someone who's willing to act as a facilitator and guide the conversation.



**Bryana Russell**





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An offering from the  AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE and  ignatius press



## FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Ben Akers

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Happy Easter! The penitential season of Lent has given way to the festive season of Easter. In this celebratory season, the Church's liturgical calendar reflects its joyful spirit. May is filled with the feasts of many great saints such as St. Celestine V, St. Philip Neri, and St. Joan of Arc, whose feast days are May 19, May 26, and May 30, respectively. To commemorate these saints and learn more about them, FORMED encourages you to watch *Saint Celestine: The Pope Who Quit*; *Saint Philip Neri: I Prefer Heaven*; and *Joan of Arc*. Furthermore, do not let the graces of the Easter season go to waste! As you continue to grow in your relationship with the Lord in and after the season of Easter, consider examining the ways you can grow in virtue by joining Dr. Edward Sri in *The Art of Living*. In this series, Dr. Sri and I unpack what virtue is and how to cultivate virtue. May is also devoted to Our Lady. Consider growing in relationship and devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, with Fr. Michael Gaitley's mini-retreat, *33-Days to Morning Glory*. Fr. Gaitley succinctly distills the Church's teaching on Marian devotion in this series of videos. May, moreover, is also Mental Health Awareness Month. To better minister to your parishioners' mental health, FORMED recommends *The Sanctuary Course for Catholics*, which will equip you to care for the mental health needs of your parish! As always, know that the FORMED team is praying for you, hoping that these resources lead you and your parish closer to the Lord.