

6 ***SAINTS TO PRAY TO WHILE DEALING WITH DEPRESSION***

This month, the Holy Father fervently prays for the people who are suffering from depression that they may find support and light that opens them up to life.

Did you know that aside from helping the Holy Father to pray for the people suffering from depression, we can also ask for the intercession of the saints who may have experienced the same illness when they are still alive? Here are the six of the many saints that we could pray to while dealing with depression.

(Disclaimer: Remember that this post longs NOT to discourage people who are suffering from depression to stop asking for the help of a mental Health professional. Knowing these saints doesn't replace mental health treatment like counseling and evaluation. But turning to the lives and intercession of saints who have experienced many of the same struggles we face can only serve to edify and encourage us in our daily lives. They can pray for us and give us strength to know we aren't alone in our struggles.)

It important to note that our faith does not promise a life without suffering. What Christian faith offers for the people suffering from depression is the hope and the strength to endure whatever crosses God allows in their lives.

There are several saints who are particularly inspiring to those suffering with depression. We can not only ask them for their intercession and prayers before God similar to how we would ask a friend to pray for us, but we can also look to the model of their lives for assurance that suffering doesn't have the last word, and that there is always hope despite the darkness we might be facing.

Here are four saints you can look to if you're struggling with depression or if you know someone who is.

1. ***St. Dymphna***

St. Dymphna is the patron saint of those who struggle with depression or anxiety, which is why she's perhaps the most well-known and called-upon saint for mental illness. She lived during the seventh century in Ireland; her father was not Catholic and her mother died when she was relatively young.

After her mother's death, Dymphna's father experienced severe mental illness, and in his psychosis wanted to marry Dymphna to replace her mother. Dymphna refused her father's

propositions and fled to Belgium, and ultimately was beheaded by soldiers commanded by her father.

2. *St. Benedict Joseph Labre*

St. Benedict Joseph Labre was born in France in 1748 as one of 18 children. The deepest desire of his youth was to become a priest, so he left home at a young age to study with his uncle, who was a priest. His uncle died, however, and Benedict subsequently tried and failed ten times to join various religious communities.

When he was finally accepted into a religious community, the way of life proved detrimental to his mental health and he left after neurosis made it impossible to continue. He found his true vocation, however, in becoming a pilgrim: he went on pilgrimages to all of the major shrines in Europe, living in poverty along the way. He spent the last six years of his life in Rome, sleeping in the Coliseum at night and praying in various churches. Those who knew him in Rome quickly began recognizing him as a saint after his death at age 35 and he was canonized in 1881. He is also the patron saint of the homeless.

3. *St. Louis Martin*

St. Louis Martin is best known for being the saint-father of the beloved St. Therese of Lisieux. He is a model for holy fatherhood, and he and his wife, St. Zélie, are the only married couple ever canonized by the Church. But he also may have experienced depression later in life.

All five of his daughters grew up to join convents, and his wife died when she was only 45 (when St. Therese was 4). He began to display symptoms of mental illness not long after Therese entered the convent. After experiencing symptoms of dementia, depression, speech impediments, episodes of fear, and even running away for days at a time, he was eventually placed in a mental hospital. While he is the patron saint of widowers and parents, he also knew what it was to experience depression, making him a great saint to turn to in the midst of mental health struggles.

4. *St. Jane Frances de Chantal*

St. Jane lived from 1572 to 1651 in France and was born to wealthy parents. She married and had four children, but her husband died in a hunting accident. After this, she fell into a deep depression, which was made worse when her difficult father-in-law insisted she and her children move in with him.

She sought a spiritual director and met St. Francis de Sales when he came to her town during Lent to preach a retreat. St. Francis de Sales, also a saint often invoked for help with anxiety and depression, offered guidance and counsel that helped her encounter the love and mercy of God. His work, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, (which is still popular today) gave her great peace.

5. *St. Therese of Lisieux*

It's speculated that, beyond intense fears and sensitive nature, St. Therese also suffered from OCD and depression.

6. *St. Margaret of Cortona*

After the death of the man she lived/had an affair with, St. Margaret went through prolonged periods of self-loathing and did all she could to make herself unattractive to those of the opposite sex. Rumors and gossip plagued her for the rest of her life. That's why she is a patron of mental illness and against temptations.

Sources: