

Diocese of Phoenix & Bishop Dolan collaborate with Pope Leo XIV & Vatican on Mental Health

In an ongoing effort to accompany those with mental health challenges, the Catholic Diocese of Phoenix is collaborating with the Vatican and Pope Leo XIV on two major global initiatives this week; producing a video that will be distributed globally, and Phoenix Bishop John Dolan will be a featured speaker in Rome around mental health discussions at a three-day conference.

“The Pope Video,” a monthly video distributed globally with the prayer intentions of Pope Leo XIV, was released today, focusing on the pope’s support and prayers to those who struggle with suicidal thoughts. The video is distributed by the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network with the support of Vatican Media. Today’s release is in conjunction with a conference in Rome (Nov. 5-7) centered around dialogue and keynote speakers on mental health, which will include two talks from Bishop Dolan. The international conference is organized by the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers (ACMHM) under the patronage of the Pontifical Academy for Life. People from all over the world involved in the pastoral care of mental health will gather for three days in Pius X Hall, located on via dell’Ospedale.

LINK TO VIDEO (English): <https://youtu.be/luhc94w19Jc?si=Kwwgk4l71bUbnmHi>

LINK TO VIDEO (Spanish subtitles):

<https://youtu.be/ds7uc5LeDMk?si=LFdfdCxtc3V5QMHc>

In the words of the prayer read by the Holy Father, “We come to you this month for all the people who live in darkness and despair, may they always find a community that welcomes them, listens to them and accompanies them.” He asks the Church – dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, associations of the faithful – to prevent the suffering of those who are desperate, who experience the temptation of taking their own life, which is made even more intolerable by loneliness. Everyone, believers included, “is also vulnerable to sadness

without hope.” He asks the Lord to teach us “how to be close with respect and tenderness,” with “an attentive and compassionate heart,” to “offer comfort and support” and encourages us to seek “the necessary professional help.”

“The Holy Father’s intention this month for those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts, particularly that they will find the support and love they need in their community, is very close to my heart,” said Bishop Dolan. “I have personally walked the difficult road of suicide loss. I lost my brother, Tom, my sisters, Terese and Mary, and my brother-in-law, Joe, to death by suicide. There are certain wounds and mysteries that we cannot comprehend. And yet, we hope. We trust in a loving Father who holds our loved ones near, and we turn to one another, walking forward together as companions on the journey. If you feel broken, if you are struggling with suicidal thoughts, know that you are deeply loved and the Church is here for you. You are not alone.”

According to the World Health Organization, around 720,000 people die by suicide each year and over half of the suicides (56-percent) occur prior to the age of 50. Richer nations are not exempt from this risk: in the United States, for example, the current suicide rate is a third higher than it was in 2000.

A pastoral priority, the Diocese of Phoenix has a dedicated Office of Mental Health Ministry that provides safe spaces for listening, offers community training programs, has developed partnerships with local organizations and healthcare providers, celebrates an annual Mass of Remembrance for those who have died by suicide, shares clear guidance on how to help someone in crisis and leads public campaigns to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness.

“The theme of preventing suicide,” said Father Cristóbal Fones, S.J., the International director of the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network, deeply challenges the Church. “This is not the first time that a prayer intention highlights the fragility of mental health: in

November 2021, Pope Francis asked for prayers for people who suffer from depression; and in April 2020, for those who struggle with addiction. He reminded us that the Christian community is called to take care of interior wounds, too. Pope Leo XIV confirms this and is relaunching this path. He has already indicated that in October 2026, there will be a specific focus on the pastoral care of mental health. This is a sign of his attentiveness regarding this crucial theme for today's society.

"In November's prayer, the Pope emphasizes that we are all 'vulnerable.' It encompasses every person, including religious and consecrated persons. Our human hearts, just like the Heart of Jesus, are not immune to being wounded and suffering. No one is exempt from the darkness of desperation. This is why the Christian community must become a welcoming place, a place of healing, where those who suffer feel at home.

"The Church is not a substitute for healthcare professionals – psychologists, doctors, therapists. It can carry out an important role by offering proximity, listening and hope. We can learn in our parishes and dioceses about the types of lifestyles we can construct to promote prevention: reaching out to those who suffer, comforting those who are sad, taking care of each other, sharing the hope that inspires us. This is why the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network has mental health particularly at heart."

The Pope Video is an official global initiative with the purpose of disseminating the Holy Father's monthly prayer intentions. It is carried out by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer). Since 2016, The Pope Video has had more than 253 million views across all the Vatican's social networks, and is translated into more than 23 languages, receiving press coverage in 114 countries. The Diocese of Phoenix's Office of Communications collaborated with the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network to produce the historic video, which includes several members of the Diocesan Pastoral Center staff appearing in the video. The church scenes were filmed at St. Francis of Assisi Mission in Scottsdale, Ariz.