

Op-Ed for *Clergy Care Collective*

Title: A Church That Heals: Why We Must Support the Mental Health of Our Clergy

By Rev. Matthew González, J.D.

Clergy are called to be shepherds, healers, and proclaimers of the Gospel. But who cares for the caretakers?

Too often, we assume that those in ministry—pastors, priests, deacons, and seminarians—are spiritually invincible. We expect them to bear our burdens, comfort the dying, preach the Good News, and navigate congregational conflicts, all without showing signs of strain. But the truth is, clergy are human. And many suffer in silence.

This is why I founded Clergy Care Collective, a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to the holistic well-being of those in or preparing for Christian ministry. Rooted in the Gospel and inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, we advocate for clergy mental health, support seminarians, and celebrate the deep gifts of pastoral scholarship and vocational service. Our mission is as bold as it is urgent: to ensure that those called to ministry do not burn out, break down, or feel alone.

We live in a world marked by spiritual fatigue and rising mental illness. Pastors are expected to do more with less—less time, less support, and, tragically, less empathy when they themselves are hurting. According to studies, rates of depression and anxiety among clergy rival those of first responders. Many hesitate to seek help for fear of judgment or professional repercussions.

Clergy Care Collective exists to change this. We provide confidential peer support groups, referrals to trusted therapists and spiritual directors, and theological resources that integrate mental health into faithful ministry. We champion those with disabilities and mental illness—not just as people to be served, but as beloved children of God whose experiences are vital to the Body of Christ.

Our patron saint is St. Dymphna, the 7th-century martyr and miracle worker known as the protector of those with mental illness. Her story reminds us that healing is possible—and that the Church can and must be a place of refuge, not stigma.

We also draw strength from Catholic Social Teaching, which demands justice and dignity for all, including those the world often overlooks. Pope Francis reminds us that “the weakest among us” must never be abandoned. We believe the mentally ill, the neurodivergent, and the weary shepherds of Christ deserve care, community, and hope.

Clergy Care Collective is intentionally ecumenical. We support Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox clergy alike, affirming that our unity in Christ is stronger than our differences. We

also support LGBTQ+ clergy and seminarians and stand against discrimination in any form. The Church must be a place where all are seen, supported, and sent forth in mission.

Our programs are free, our finances transparent, and our commitment unwavering. We are funded entirely by generous donors who recognize that healthy clergy create healthy congregations. Our leadership team includes ordained ministers, scholars, and lay leaders who understand both the joys and burdens of ministry firsthand.

We are just getting started. And we need your prayers, your partnership, and your voice.

To those in ministry who are struggling: you are not alone. To those considering seminary but worried about stigma: you are seen and valued. And to every Christian who wants to build a more compassionate Church: join us.

It's time to care for those who care for others. The Gospel demands no less.

To learn more or support our mission, visit www.clergycarescollective.org.