

## Op-Ed: Who Cares for the Caregivers?

By Rev. Matthew González, J.D.

Founder and Executive Director, Clergy Care Collective

In every corner of the country, pastors, priests, seminarians, and ministry leaders are quietly holding together the emotional and spiritual fabric of their communities. They sit beside hospital beds, preach hope from pulpits, feed the hungry, and carry the pain of others with astonishing grace. But who cares for them? Who carries them when the burden becomes too heavy?

The answer, too often, is no one.

America's clergy are facing a crisis of burnout, depression, anxiety, and isolation. Many feel they must suffer in silence, fearing judgment, stigma, or dismissal if they admit their struggles. Some step away from ministry altogether. Others continue, hearts fraying at the seams. Behind the collar, behind the robe, behind the title is a human being—wounded, exhausted, and often alone.

This crisis is not merely personal; it is structural. The very systems that rely on clergy to hold others up offer few supports to hold them. In our churches and seminaries, there remains a dangerous myth that strength means suppressing suffering. That silence about mental illness is somehow holy. It is not. It is deadly.

That's why we founded Clergy Care Collective.

We are a nationwide, ecumenical 501(c)(3) public charity rooted in the Gospel and Catholic social teaching, committed to supporting the mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of clergy and seminarians. We walk with them—intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually—affirming that to serve well, ministers must also be cared for.

Our mission includes providing practical support for those who are most vulnerable, such as individuals awaiting Supplemental Security Income (SSI) adjudication. The process is long, complicated, and unjustly delayed for many, particularly those suffering from mental illness. We offer interim charity to help them survive this bureaucratic limbo. These are not faceless applicants—they are often future pastors, the very people called to be vessels of grace.

We also work to reform the safety net system itself. The Gospel compels us to stand with the poor and marginalized, to proclaim Christ among those the world forgets. Catholic social teaching calls this the preferential option for the poor. We call it common sense—and

common decency.

Mental health must not be a side issue in ministry. It is central. Those in ministry are not superhuman. Many carry wounds of trauma, of exhaustion, of spiritual anguish. And some, like myself, have been diagnosed with mental illness. I live with depression and anxiety. Through medication, prayer, Eucharistic adoration, and community, I've found healing. But I've also faced the crushing silence and stigma that so often surround these realities.

Our work is not only about crisis response—it is about celebration and resilience. We champion theological scholarship, amplifying voices of faithful thinkers and writers who nourish the Church intellectually. We stand for transparency, financial integrity, and ecumenical unity.

We are Clergy Care Collective, and we are just getting started.

If you are a pastor or seminarian reading this and feeling unseen: you are not alone. If you are a donor wondering whether to invest in clergy wellness: please do. If you are a Church leader skeptical of mental health ministry: come and see.

Because if we do not care for those who care for others, the whole body suffers.

We invite you to learn more, to pray with us, and to stand in solidarity with the wounded shepherds of God's people. In a time of fracture, let us become healers of those who heal.

Learn more at [www.clergycarecollective.org](http://www.clergycarecollective.org).

Rev. Matthew González, J.D., is the Founder and Executive Director of Clergy Care Collective, a nonprofit organization based in Chicago and serving clergy and seminarians nationwide. Members of the news media can reach him directly at [press@clergyarecollective.org](mailto:press@clergyarecollective.org)