

"God who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Ephesians 2:4-5



Your April Newsletter

Our Mission:

to provide counseling which is faithful to the teachings, values, and traditions of the Catholic Church.

Our Primary Services:

Evaluation and Treatment for mental illness, addictions, and spiritual distress.

Monthly Newsletter Issue #36



Happy Easter! Jesus is Risen!

We like [this brief video by Fr. Francis Frankovich, CC](#). He asks "What does the Resurrection mean for YOU, here and now, today?" Easter is not a one-time holiday event. Easter is not "over."



April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

This month in Sugar Land the trees in major street esplanades were circled with blue ribbons to remind passersby about child abuse. Child abuse can involve physical, sexual, or emotional maltreatment but can also include neglect. All adults need to be vigilant in all settings (home, school, church, neighborhood, et cetera) in order to protect children from harm. In every Catholic diocese in the United States for many years now

there have been instituted training and prevention programs to create safe environments for children in Catholic churches and schools. Anyone having contact with children (whether volunteer or employee, including priests and laypersons) in US Catholic churches or schools is required to have this training and is subject to a criminal background check prior to starting his or her job. In the US, over 2 million of these background checks have been done as a result of these safe environment programs. Does this mean child abuse is wiped out? Unfortunately not, but we have to hope that we are at least making some progress and keep working at it. [Here is a brief video by the US Catholic Bishops about National Child Abuse Prevention Month](#). These prevention programs are also now being extended to Catholic dioceses in nearly every country in the world and to many other non-Catholic organizations in which children can be at risk. Child abuse is certainly not just a Catholic problem. Any instance of child abuse and neglect is tragic. Some children don't get help for the negative consequences of their abuse until well into their adult years. Learn what you can do to protect children by being vigilant, controlling access to children, asking questions of caregivers, and being an adult with whom they can freely talk. It is an important part of our Catholic faith to stand up and watch out for the most vulnerable, including children. Let us not be silent and unaware.

Mother/Daughter Program

There will be a mother-daughter program on Saturday, May 9 from 2:00 - 4:30 pm; sign-in 1:30 pm. at St. Bernadette Catholic Church (Parish Life Center), 15500 El Camino Real, Houston. The program is for girls ages 9-12 and their mothers or significant mother-figure. The program fosters an atmosphere of love and understanding in discussing God's plan for the gift of human sexuality and the challenges of living chastely.

There is a program fee of \$35/family which includes refreshments and take-home resources. Registration is limited to 50 families for each program. The programs are sponsored

by the Archdiocesan Office of Adolescent-Catechesis. To register, go to [this link](#) or for more information contact Mark Ciesielski at 713-741-8792 or email him at mciesielski@archgh.org.



College Drinking

After the Resurrection at Pentecost, the early Christians were “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4) and observers thought they were intoxicated (Acts 2:13). St. Peter clarified: “These people are not drunk, as you suppose” (Acts 2:15). Could it be that so many of us today put on an artificial and false inebriation with alcohol or marijuana because we are unconsciously seeking the true and real intoxication of the Spirit? See [Fr. Cantalamessa’s book](#) for more on this idea.

If you have a young adult in college, hopefully he or she survived Spring Break this year. Spring Break is traditionally a time of heavy drinking for many college youth. Have a talk this summer break with your college young adult about drinking during the school year. There is a significant number of students who will graduate with a college degree and an alcohol problem. The following information is from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Virtually all college students experience the effects of college drinking – whether they drink or not. The problem with college drinking is not necessarily the drinking itself, but the negative consequences that result from excessive drinking. There are alternatives to drinking in college, and there are Christian service project alternatives to Spring Break parties.

Here is the breakdown from the NIAAA (prepare to be shocked):

College drinking is extremely widespread:

- About four out of five college students drink alcohol.
- About half of college students who drink, also consume alcohol through [binge drinking](#).

Each year, drinking affects college students, as well as college communities, and families. The consequences of drinking include:

- **Death:** 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries.
- **Assault:** More than 690,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.
- **Sexual Abuse:** More than 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.
- **Injury:** 599,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 receive unintentional injuries while under the influence of alcohol.
- **Academic Problems:** About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of their drinking including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.
- **Health Problems/Suicide Attempts:** More than 150,000 students develop an alcohol-related health problem and between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of students

indicate that they tried to commit suicide within the past year due to drinking or drug use.

For more information, [follow this link about college drinking prevention](#). Write your son or daughter's school and demand that they do more to curb drinking.

Pray for Marriage

At this time there are 9 justices on the US Supreme Court considering the US federal government's legal definition of marriage: 6 Catholic and 3 Jewish. The religious definition of marriage for traditional Jewish and Catholic faith is clearly opposed to same-sex marriage. It remains clear and unchanging based on a biblical foundation and theology going back thousands of years. [Here is the link to the Catholic Catechism on the topic of marriage](#).

The US Government and Mental Illness

The number of Americans who have mental illness and addictions is staggering, and these issues tear at our marriages and families. The federal and state government has chosen not to adequately fund research and treatment in this area. Literally billions of dollars are wasted through uncoordinated government programs that target only small portions of the population or in prevention programs that are completely without any research merit but sound great on the campaign trail. In most states, as in Texas, the public mental health system can provide services only for severe mental illness and for mental health emergencies, leaving huge segments of the population with any resources for help. Since President Kennedy's community mental health legislation in the 60's, there has been a decrease in funding for mental health treatment facilities while our prisons and streets are filled with those who have mental illness. In the name of social justice, contact your legislators and ask for a comprehensive national program that will address mental illness and give states the funding and accountability they need to make a difference for as many people as possible.



A Second Gratia Plena Office

St. Frances Cabrini, known affectionately as “Mother Cabrini,” was an Italian religious sister who founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart (MSC). She was sent to New York by the pope as a missionary where she founded orphanages, schools, and hospitals (a total of 67 institutions around the country). She traveled around the US raising funds for her work, and stopped by the Sacco family home in Louisiana, as there were many Sicilian immigrant families living in the area. Dr. Ken has another connection to her, when his family visited the shrine on the mountaintop in Colorado to ask for St. Cabrini’s intercession for a dangerously sick child in the family. It does not seem surprising then that Gratia Plena opens a second office now, temporarily located at St. Frances Cabrini parish in Southeast Houston, at the invitation of pastor Fr. Frank Fabj. This office will move to a nearby SE Houston location just as soon as the funds are raised. You may make donations for this office [through our website](#). We have two counselors working at this new office. Please contact our main office at (832) 532-0129 to schedule or refer clients to this second location. St. Frances Cabrini: pray for us!



Letter of the Month Recommendation

Instead of recommending a book this month, we recommend the writing of Pope Francis regarding mercy: *Misericordiae Vultus* which means “the face of mercy.” This type of letter is formally called a “papal bull.” In this excellent document the pope describes that the Father provided His Son Jesus to give us a human face for God’s divine mercy. You can read the official Vatican document in English [here](#).

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