

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Focus: Youth and Mental Health

From the perspective of the Church's Social Doctrine, the key issue is not the use of technology as such, but the vision that underlies it. If the human being is treated as something to be perfected or surpassed, it becomes easier to accept that some lives are less useful, less desirable or less worthy. In the name of progress, "necessary sacrifices" may begin to be justified, placing the burden on the most vulnerable in pursuit of a supposed optimization of the species. In this regard, the aforementioned warning of Saint Pope Paul VI retains great foresight: indeed, scientific and technological advances, when detached from moral and social progress, end up turning against humanity. [130] For this reason, a clear distinction must be made. It is one thing to integrate technology within a human-centered, relational vision; it is quite another to be guided by an outlook that devalues human limits and promises a purely technical form of "salvation."

Magnifica Humanitas of Pope Leo XIV, #17

A "crisis of meaning"

Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin speaks at a Vatican conference on mental health.

At the heart of the crisis, Cardinal Parolin said, lies a deeper "crisis of meaning."

"A society that offers young people every means but no purpose; every connection but no authentic relationship; every answer but no profound question, is a society that ultimately abandons them," he said.

Echoing the appeal launched by Pope Leo XIV to religion teachers in his apostolic letter to become "choreographers of hope," he said education must help young people find the tools and horizons needed to live "full, free and meaningful lives."

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2026-05/cardinal-parolin-conference-mental-health-young-people-vatican.html>

When human beings are reduced to performance, consumption or a statistical figure, profound inner suffering inevitably arises. Many young people today live under the yoke of expectations and performance, immersed in a frenzied competitiveness that generates anxiety, fear of not being good enough, and disorientation.

For this reason, we cannot approach the issue of mental health solely as a clinical or technical matter. Undoubtedly, the contributions of science, psychology, medicine and the neurosciences are indispensable. But we also believe that human beings can live authentically — and overcome so many inner frailties — within a horizon of meaning. When this horizon darkens, inner emptiness, isolation and despair increase. When, on the other hand, a person discovers that their life has value, that they are loved, awaited and called to a task in the world, then hope is born. And hope is not a naive illusion: it is a spiritual force that sustains life, even in the most difficult moments.

Address of Pope Leo XIV to participants in the International Conference "Maps of Hope for a Regional Educational Agenda: Mental Health, Digital Technologies and Education" Saturday, 30 May 2026

**You formed my
inmost being;
you knit me in
my mother's
womb.**

Psalms 139:13-16



What can we do?

Prayer for Youth Mental Health



“O Sacred Heart of Jesus, source of infinite love and mercy, I come before You bringing the youth who are struggling with their mental and emotional health. You know the weight they carry, the silent battles they face, and the anxieties of their hearts. Lord, wrap them in Your loving embrace and grant them a peace that surpasses all understanding. Heal their minds, calm their fears, and replace their sorrow with hope and joy. Give them the courage to overcome their struggles and guide those who care for them, so they may be surrounded by love, understanding, and support. Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place their minds, bodies, and spirits completely into Your hands. Amen.”

This prayer can be said as part of your daily prayer practice, with your family perhaps at meal time, or with any group you meet with during January.

Resources

Video:

Young People and Mental Health

Bishop Robert E. Barron, Chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, discusses the mental health crisis among young people with two Catholic psychologists, Dr. Young Hoang, the President of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement, and Dr. Helena Orellana, the Director of Clinical Training and an Assistant Professor at Divine Mercy University. The discussion touches on issues such as social media, depression, and spiritual engagement. Part of the ongoing USCCB National Catholic Mental Health Campaign, coordinated by the U.S. Bishops' Committees on Domestic Justice and Human Development and Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, supported by a coalition of Catholic collaborators working with mental health issues.



<https://youtu.be/HuFEfooiXus?si=yOJ8msppudDR29Ry>



The mission of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) is to support and strengthen those who accompany young people as they encounter and follow Jesus Christ.

<https://nfcym.org/resources/topics/mental-health/>

“We cannot do this alone”

Leo XIV speaks about mental health among young people at Barcelona vigil

https://youtu.be/Q7W3imlN7eU?si=t5oSMz8JEMUEjJ_y