

## Bell Let's Talk Day, January 21 "Blessed are the poor in spirit"

Mental illness is often a misunderstood term that carries with it a heavy weight. Many people believe mental illnesses are rare and only happen to "other people." However, according to the World Health Organization, globally, more than a billion people live with a mental health condition. (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>)

Far from being rare, mental illness is pervasive and affects many families today. Mental illness is defined as a disease that causes mild to severe disturbances in thought and/or behavior, resulting in an inability to cope with life's ordinary demands and routines. There are more than 200 classified forms of mental illness, varying from certain anxieties or mild depression to bipolar disorder to schizophrenia. One in three workplace disability claims in Canada are related to mental illnesses.

Bell Let's Talk Day is January 21, 2026, marking the 16th annual event focused on mental health awareness, acceptance, and action, with the theme "Taking a moment for mental health" to encourage self-care, supporting loved ones, and community involvement, with Bell committing another \$10 million in funding for Canadian initiatives. Visit [Bell.ca/LetsTalk](https://Bell.ca/LetsTalk) to download the Bell Let's Talk toolkit and *Conversation Guides* and share your own actions using #BellLetsTalk.

The phrase "blessed be the poor," (or more commonly, "blessed are the poor in spirit") from The Beatitudes, relates to mental health by emphasizing humility, the acknowledgment of one's need for support (divine or communal), and the reduction of self-sufficiency and pride, which can lead to inner peace and a stronger support system.

Saint Pope John Paul II said, "Whoever suffers from mental illness 'always' bears God's image and likeness in himself, as does every human being. In addition, he 'always' has the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such."

As members of The Catholic Women's League, let us continue to respond with compassion and tenderness to persons struggling with mental health challenges and to accompany those who are sick, disabled, and vulnerable. A significant way to advocate on their behalf is to focus on opposing the expansion of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) to include individuals whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness. This expansion closes the door to any hope of recovery and undermines the dignity of human life. The Bishops of Canada's most recent letter can be found at [https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CCCB-Letter-to-the-Honourable-Kamal-Khera-P.C.-M.P.-Minister-of-Health\\_MAID-Advanced-requests.pdf](https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CCCB-Letter-to-the-Honourable-Kamal-Khera-P.C.-M.P.-Minister-of-Health_MAID-Advanced-requests.pdf)

Sue Lubowitz  
Service Chairperson  
Ontario Provincial Council of  
The Catholic Women's League of Canada