St. Dymphna

Feast Day: May 15



Patron saint of those with epilepsy, incest victims, those who have lost their parents, mental health caregivers and professionals, those suffering from emotional, nervous, or mental illness, rape and sexual abuse victims and runaways.

BORN: 7TH CENTURY IRELAND
DIED: AROUND 620 AD
GHEEL, BELGIUM

Catholic Social Teaching principles:

- **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**
- **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

- St. Dymphna was born in the 7th century to a pagan king, Damon, and his Christian wife. It is said that St. Dymphna's mother was very beautiful, and when she died at a young age, Damon was inconsolable.
- Damon's mental health began to suffer, and he started entertaining the possibility of marrying his daughter, St. Dymphna, the only woman whose beauty was comparable to her mother's. St. Dymphna, then about age 15, refused her father's advances. She had made a vow of virginity, pledging herself wholly to God, at age 14
- Dymphna told her father she could not agree to his desire to marry her. When he became enraged at her rejection, St. Dymphna fled with her spiritual director, Fr. Gerebernus, to Belgium, where they thought they would be safe from the king's violent anger.
- Damon joined his men in the town of Gheel, Belgium, where St. Dymphna had been found. He tried to persuade St. Dymphna to join him as his wife, but again, she refused. The king ordered that his men kill Fr. Gerebernus and St. Dymphna as punishment for disobeying him. The men beheaded Fr. Gerebernus, but were unable to harm the princess. The king was overcome with fury, took his sword, and beheaded his own daughter.

Catholic Charities Social Concerns

-Information provided by Catholic Saint Medals.com

Pray

Reflect on the following scripture :

"'My soul is deprived of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is; remembering it over and over, my soul is downcast. But this I will call to mind; therefore I will hope: The Lord's acts of mercy are not exhausted, his compassion is not spent They are renewed each morning—great is your faithfulness!"

Lamentations 13: 17, 20–23

Learn

- For kids: Watch this 7 minute cartoon video about the life and martyrdom of St. Dymphna.
- Visit the webpage (or make a pilgrimage to the site!) of the National Shrine of St. Dymphna in Massillon, Ohio.





Above: First Class Relic of St. Dymphna at the National Shrine of St. Dymphna in Massillon, OH.

Act: ideas from The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)

- Listen: Listen with compassion; form relationships.
- Learn: Learn about local mental health systems.
- Pray: Include petitions relating to mental illness in Prayers of the Faithful
- Include: Include parents, siblings, spouses, children and extended family in pastoral care
- Invite: Invite persons with mental illness who live in group homes near your parish to worship
- Accompany: Specifically include mention of mental illness when inviting parishioners to a healing service.
- Visit: Visit at home, in the hospital, on the streets, or in jail after getting the person's approval. Stigma is still far to present for people with a mental illness.
- Educate: Invite parish groups to have speakers on mental illness at their meetings.
- Advocate: Defend the dignity of individuals with mental illness and oppose stigma and discrimination. Encourage reform and improvements to the criminal justice and health care systems and support efforts to promote supportive employment and affordable housing for people living with a mental illness.

Picture to the left: The Church of St. Dymphna in Belgium where her remains are located.