

Emotional Affliction and Poverty: Locating Human Dignity on the Margins of Society

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In this paper, I address the indisputable link between mental illness and poverty by providing a overview of the state of the research on this subject. I address the psychiatric diagnoses most likely to trigger the so-called 'downward drift' into poverty and addiction, provide an exposition of some of the main areas of intervention (addiction, human trafficking, and the current crisis of mental health issues in refugees) required to address this crisis, and examine mental health issues specific to families, including pre-and post-natal mental health care for mothers, and also for children living in poverty. Finally, I examine the response offered by the Church. I contend that, while much has been accomplished, more remains to be done. I argue for a more direct acknowledgment about the implications of poverty as a significant risk factor for mental illness, and the vulnerability that this creates not only in the individual, but also for family structures and society as a whole. I suggest that in doing so, the Church will continue to respond to the call that every person be given "everything necessary for leading a life truly human."