

"So the word of God spread." (Acts 6:7)



Your May 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.

May is Mental Health Month!

Over 15 million American men and woman experience social anxiety disorder. Symptoms typically begin around age 13. 36% of people with social anxiety disorder suffer with symptoms for more than 10 years before seeking help. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) has an excellent website with information including [new videos about Social Anxiety Disorder](#). The [SAMHSA \(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration\) website](#) also has a wealth of free educational materials and links. For example, [here is a free "toolkit"](#) that has information on how to quit smoking (see page 78) which they are promoting for Prevention Week, which is this week.

Office Closed on Memorial Day

The [Loving and Eating Well Group \(LEW\)](#) will not meet on Monday the 26th due to the holiday. We will resume Monday, June 2nd at 5:30pm. This is a group for Catholic women who want support and information about healthy eating and intimacy. Bring a friend, only \$10 per session, as we have room for more participants at this time. We really have a great time in this group! Ask your pastor to post a notice in the bulletin. Remind him that Gratia Plena is a nonprofit organization serving the Catholic community.

Mental Illness and Family Members

We find it very common that family members do not know how to support a loved one who has a mental illness and/or an addiction. And the afflicted person often does not know how to ask for the support and understanding that they need. Dr. Ken wrote a [blog article to address this issue](#), in the form of a letter. This letter could be adapted for your own use to communicate

with a friend or family member. The [National Alliance for Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) has programs to support and educate family members about mental illness. Locally there is a [Greater Houston chapter](#) and a [Fort Bend county chapter](#).

Who is Welcome at Gratia Plena?

All are welcome! While most of our clients are Catholic, we have clients that are not even connected to a church at all. We have been asked if people with a same-sex attraction are welcome, and our answer is a clear and quick “absolutely.” If you are not clear on the status of the Catholic Church on same-sex attraction, [see this recent video](#) for clarification. You don’t have insurance or much money for counseling? We have never turned anyone away for financial reasons. Worried that Gratia Plena is not the place for you because it is a non-profit? To us, “non-profit” means that our first responsibility is to serve others. All are welcome!

School’s Out for the Summer...

We welcome home all of the young people who were off at college, and we congratulate all those who are graduating from high school. Yes, we are still cooking up that send-off event for new college freshmen probably to be held in the first week of August. We might call it “Spiritual Boot Camp” or “Catholics Coping with College” but we’d still like your involvement in the project. More details to come soon. In the interim [here’s a cool video](#) that Rosanna recently shared with us, a short but very funny offering which was created by some of her talented California friends.

Yik Yak

It is so important that as parents and educators we monitor the phone and computers of our youth and to protect them from evil and temptation. It is also critical that we do our best to keep up with the rapid developments and changes to social media. Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram all have serious dangers for youth. Here is a new one to add to the mix: “Yik Yak.” Even if these modes of communication are legal, they can be abused by users. We must educate our youth to

consider the feelings of others, to help them understand the damage caused by bullying, and to keep them emotionally and physically safe. See [this article about Yik Yak](#) by noted psychiatrist Dr. Keith Ablow.

Drummers' Brains are Different

All jokes aside, [this article](#) may be very interesting to you, particularly to musicians. Shout out to drummer friends in Phoenix: Scott, Roy, and Dowell. Next month: "bass players' brains are different" (just kidding).

More on Brain Studies...

There are many forms of meditation and relaxation and prayer. We frequently recommend various types to our clients in our work. Here is an interesting study about [the brain and meditation](#).

Website to Promote Adultery

Yep, you read it right. By calling attention to this, we know that we run the risk that some might be attracted toward this evil. But we solemnly urge you to stay away, and instead to pray the [prayer of St. Michael the Archangel](#) about this issue. Unfortunately, the website was developed several years ago with the sole intention to facilitate adultery...and the sad thing is that it has been apparently been successful at its mission. The company likes to boast of its large membership: claiming 160,000 sign-ups in the Houston area alone. They state that the largest concentration of users tend to be in the most affluent areas of large cities. In the Greater Houston area, they report that Sugar Land has the most members. Although we don't know if any of their numbers and reports are true, we do know that we need to pray for marriage because it is always under attack by our enemy. The spiritual battle is real and it is serious. Marriage is attacked because of its beauty and potential to display some of the greatest attributes of Christ: life-giving love, mercy, and selflessness...all of which can draw us closer to Him, to each other, and to a wholeness and fullness internally.

Are Positive Self-Affirmations Sinful?

Counselors and self-improvement coaches often give homework assignments that involve identifying and reciting positive self-affirmations on a daily basis...especially for those suffering from low self-esteem or depression. Here are some examples: "I am a valuable and worthwhile person" or "people will love me for just being myself." These are not sinful in themselves. However we must always be on guard for going overboard and creating a bigger ego, falling into excessive self-love and pride. This certainly is not a good thing. Instead, it is important for us to see ourselves as we truly are, as God sees us...no more and no less. Affirmations like "God loves me despite my imperfection" or "I am of great value to my Creator" are wonderful. Write your own and try some on for size today. Say them aloud with gusto!

Two New Organizations

Gratia Plena staff are participating in two local groups which we feel are quite important. The Catholic Healthcare Professionals of Houston is a chapter of the Catholic Medication Association. Although there was a CMA group in Houston in the past, the new version reformed and began meeting last fall. Even though they are primarily composed of physicians, other healthcare professionals are welcome too. Secondly, the Greater Houston Catholic Mental Health Professionals group just had their first meeting and plan to meet quarterly.

Book of the Month Recommendation:

We thought we'd see if you were paying attention to our newsletters. We usually alternate book and movie recommendations on alternating months. Last month we recommended a book and this month we're doing so again. This time we recommend a publication by Bishop Paul Loverde of Arlington, Virginia: [Bought with a Price](#). Bulk copies can be purchased but it also can be downloaded for free from the website of the diocese as an Adobe PDF file. Although it is targeted for men to protect themselves and their families, it is a good read for anyone, including women. In next month's

newsletter, watch for our “Movie of the Month” recommendation.

Disclaimer: Gratia Plena and its staff do not receive any compensation or earthly benefits from recommending books, movies, music, websites, blogs, apps, et cetera...

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