
My Favorite Month

**An article for the *Cathedral Times*
by the Rev. Juan Sandoval, Deacon for Hispanic Ministries and Pastoral Care**

May is by far my favorite month. You might ask, why May? May celebrates many things dear to my heart: Mother's Day, Military Appreciation Month, Mental Health Month and Nurse's Week.

I love to acknowledge and show love and appreciation for all mothers, but especially for my mom; now 101 years and halfway toward 102 years. Growing up she was always there to help each of the three children with their needs, be it life, school, church or other activities we were involved in. She remains a loving and amazing mother.

The military is also very special to me. I and many in my family have proudly served in the military. My father was my role model: as a paratrooper with 101st Airborne Division, he jumped into Normandy in World War II. War is an ugly thing and so is seeing firsthand the many scars of the wounded or harmed by the various wars. Now we also see many of the psychological scars left by seeing action in any form of war or warlike activity.

Nurses are an amazing source of humanity. They care about and they love their patients. During my work in critical care, I saw this in action. For many of the patients, prayer was a form of healing. Families often spent endless hours expectantly waiting day after day. I recall often being asked to pray with or pray for these patients and families.

May is also mental health awareness month. I have been so pleased to hear so many public service announcements on the radio and on television regarding how to attain needed mental health assistance. It has been an issue for this country as many mental health facilities have been closed over the last few decades as funding has been reduced by the powers that be.

One might wonder, "why these days of remembrance or understanding?" The commonality is this: we hold these groups in high esteem for the strength they exude and yet they are often the most vulnerable.

In addition to the devastation of mass shootings and other acts of violence often attributed to mental health issues, we are also understanding more about mental health issues post COVID. Many mothers and/or parents of children experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the prevalence of this condition is significantly higher in Latino and African American families.

Many of our veterans who have served in war zones have been diagnosed with PTSD. The issue we continue to have is a lack of sufficient resources for all of them.

Nurses on the frontline of the COVID pandemic have and continue to be diagnosed with PTSD and experience other conditions like depression, anxiety, and burnout. Many of the nurses have left the profession and many who remain have continued issues.

The Church is one place where we may see all these groups in one location where they can be in unity in prayer and in relationship. Prayer has been shown to have a very positive outcome for many with PTSD, with studies showing the positive effects of prayer on patient outcomes. Here in our Cathedral family and in the wider church, many find a shared experience that allows for a community of belonging.

Dr. Mary Chase Mize, a licensed professional counselor, assistant professor, and parishioner says belonging is the key to healing and wholeness among those who struggle with mental health concerns.

“When people feel they truly belong somewhere, it can serve as a protective factor to serious mental health concerns like suicide. Mothers, veterans, and nurses each face certain risk factors for all kinds of mental health distress – belonging in community, in relationship with others, can help make the hard work of things like counseling, therapy, and medical interventions like medication more successful,” she said.

How does the Creator inspire us once and again in relation to the divine? Relation. What did Jesus preach, teach, and live? Relation. What does the Holy Spirit move us to be in? Relation. The Holy Trinity creates, models and exists in community. We are Christians and we should strive to be in community, loving one another as Christ taught us. Pray and love for one another. Be there for one another in unity and community. And if you are struggling with a mental health concern, there are resources to help here in our community and beyond.

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

For Crisis and Immediate 24/7 Help:

- [988 Suicide and Crisis Line](#)
- [Georgia Crisis and Access Line](#) (1-800-715-4255)

Counselor and Therapist Resources in the Community:

- [The Cathedral Counseling Center](#)
- [Training and Counseling Center at St. Luke's](#)
- [Jewish Family and Career Services of Atlanta](#)