

**Boston College**  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY  
**Continuing Education Encore Events**

**Transcript of**  
**“From Mental Illness to Spiritual Wisdom: A Father-Daughter Odyssey”**  
**Part 1 of 2**

**presented on April 27, 2012 by**  
**Tom Zanzig and Barb Zanzig**

**Melinda Brown Donovan:**

My name is Melinda Brown Donovan, and I serve the School of Theology and Ministry, or STM, as we call it, as Associate Director of Continuing Education. On behalf of the Dean of the School of Theology and Ministry, it is my honor to welcome all of you to Boston College. I see a lot of familiar faces, but I also see some new people. And I'll be telling you a little bit more about our programs as we go on. Thanks to each one of you for the work that you do. Your presence here is a wonderful witness to your strong commitment to serve God's people and to bring the topic of mental illness into conversation and into your ministry.

I'd like to offer a special thanks to Susan Kay and the Archdiocese of Boston's Religious Education Office for their support in publicizing this presentation. Obviously it was very successful, judging from the large number of people that are here.

For those of you who might be new to our programs, the STM was formed in June, 2008, bringing together Boston College's Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, the Weston Jesuit School of Theology, and C21 Online. We offer graduate degrees for those who are pursuing lay and ordained ministry, as well as non-credit continuing education opportunities—on-campus, like this one, as well as online, with enrichment courses from C21 Online. More information on all of these programs is available at the registration desk, and our schedules are out for next year for the online courses. I encourage you to take those, as you wish.

And now for today. This is the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Pyne Memorial Presentation, and we are very grateful to the Pyne Foundation for their generosity and support in sustaining this annual public event. Professor Margaret Pyne, in whose memory this lecture series is named, was a lifelong advocate for disabled persons. A former associate dean of Special Education at Lesley College, Margaret Pyne had a particular vision of the need to educate theological students about ministry for and with persons with special needs. Anne Berry, Peg Pyne's friend and trustee of the Pyne Foundation, is with us today. Anne, would you like to stand up, please? [applause]

And now my colleague, Jane Regan, who is director of Continuing Education and STM associate professor of theology and religious education will introduce our speakers. [applause]

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## **Dr. Jane Regan:**

It's great to be here, and it's great to see so many of you here. And it's my pleasure to introduce to you the Zanzigs today. I have known Tom and known Tom's books for a long time, and so it's a real honor to have him with us today. Tom is a native of Wisconsin, who holds a bachelor's degree in theology and sociology from Marquette University and a master's degree in pastoral theology from St. Mary-of-the-Wood College.

Tom's professional ministry of about 43 years began as a director of religious education in a parish. How many of you started as DREs? That's it. See? They still love us out there. First, he worked in one parish and then he worked in combined parishes, where he worked particularly with adolescent catechesis or high school youth. It was there that he developed some material that he was later invited to publish through St. Mary's Press.

That led to 25 years of working at St. Mary's Press, where he made a significant contribution to the way in which high school religious education took place. In fact, you may have used his textbooks in your parishes through the years. He wrote two religion texts for Catholic high school and high school confirmation programs. He also served as managing editor and contributing author in developing religious curriculum for parish junior and senior high.

Feeling drawn to adult spirituality and faith formation, for the last 15 years Tom has been developing a model for understanding the dynamics of the spiritual life. In 2003, he left St. Mary's to focus on adults rather than adolescents. He started his own publishing and consulting company, and continues to develop concrete strategies for implementing his vision of adult faith formation.

Barbara Zanzig is a highly regarded makeup artist. After nine years with Mac Cosmetics, Barbara joined several friends in opening their own studio. In addition to weddings and special occasion makeup, Barb has worked with nationally respected fashion photographers and has also done television, theatrical, and runway makeup. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her beloved dog Bernie. [laughter]

So it's my pleasure now to welcome the Zanzigs. [applause]

## **Tom Zanzig:**

Thank you, Jane. Good morning, everybody. It is wonderful to be with you—a little nerve-racking but wonderful to be with you. I had two encounters already today that sent me into flashbacks, as if working on this presentation hadn't already done that.

Jane mentioned the 25 years of working at St. Mary's Press. Two days ago, I got an e-mail from somebody who had worked there with me for many of those years, Barbara O'Lair, who said, "I'm going to be in the audience." And it's wonderful to see her. Susan Kay had us speak here, what, three years ago, was it, Susan? My, how time flies. And it's great to see her again.

And then, right before we sat down and prepared for the introduction, somebody came up and really sent me back into past days. Barbara, who brought a little photo book of photos

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from an event that we shared in Abu Dhabi, of all places about 10 years ago, where I was asked to keynote the first ever Arabian Peninsula Catholic Religious Education Conference. And what a trip that was, and you were there, and knows good friends from there as well, so it's just wonderful to make all of these reconnections.

It's been good for Barb and me to review and in some ways relive our story in preparation for today. The first time we talked about this was in 2006. And when Barb was going through one of the crises—and she'll be telling her story in a short time—I remember one of the things I said to her was that the things that happen to us in life are for the good of all humanity. And at some point you may want and feel ready to tell your story. And after we weathered some of those crises, I remember saying, "Do you think it's time?" And she said, "Yes, I do." And so I contacted a friend in Los Angeles, and we were invited to speak about this at the 2006 LA Congress—if any of you have had that experience.

It was incredibly healing and liberating to be able to do this, to stand in front of a group and say, "This is who we are and what we've gone through." And then to have the experience of knowing that sharing our story could help and heal other people was a great gift to us. We've only shared this about three other times, and it's been a couple years since the last time. And one of the things that Barb has commented on is to look back and see the journey from a little distance. It's almost as if you're living different lives. It's a different kind of pre-med and post-med kind of story, and I think we'll hear more about that in a moment as well.

The thing that we've done that we've added to this session that we've never done before was to add a section on the pastoral implications of our story and of the whole area of mental illness and pastoral care. And we have to be clear that we are not experts in that area. We are not experts in the biochemistry of mental illness. We're not counselors. We're not psychologists. We're just a father and daughter who are trying to share our story. But what we want to facilitate for the second part of our time together today is going to be an open conversation about the connection between mental illness and pastoral care.

And just keep this in the back of your mind. When we come to a break time, which we'll do in about an hour, when we come to a break time, I'm going to be asking for three volunteers to join Barb and me as part of a panel that's going to be the way we frame the last hour or so together. And we're going to be looking for people who have had experience, personal experience, with this connection between mental illness and pastoral care. It doesn't have to be professional ministry. It could be that you've lived with it but done a lot of reflecting on the spiritual and pastoral implications of mental illness. And we'll be asking for three volunteers, so just kind of keep that in the back of your mind. You may be one of those folks. And we'll be facilitating that conversation.

There is a handout on your table that we hope you're going to have time, during the break and then as part of a table conversation, to take a look at as well, so that we don't have to present all of that information. And those are some practical suggestions on what parishes can do and what individuals can do in terms of pastoral care. So all of that will be in the last hour or so of our time together. Okay?

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Let me just set up how we're going to be talking about this. We are breaking the conversation into a little song and dance, I suppose, that Barb and I are going to be doing for the first hour or so. And we're going to be alternating what we're going to be saying. In just a minute, Barb is just going to give you a couple minutes of background on where she is right now in her life to provide a big context for all of that.

Then I'm going to come back, and I'm going to share some observations about the presumptions, the spiritual presumptions—this is going to be our focus—the spiritual learnings that we've had going through this process together. I'm going to give you some of the basic spiritual and pastoral presumptions that we framed our whole session with, so you have a sense of where we're directing all of our reflections and thoughts.

Then Barb is going to come back and share her story. And she'll be using journal entries and other explanations for what she has gone through in her own life. I will jump back up at that point and share some of the lessons I've learned as a parent. And again spiritual lessons I've learned, as a parent, from walking this difficult journey with Barb. Then she will share some of the spiritual insights and awakenings she's had as part of this.

That will take us to the break time. We'll take about 15 minutes for a break. When you come back, you'll be doing some table conversation about all of that as well as the handout, and then we go into the panel discussion for our remaining time. So that's the plan for the day. Make sense? Okay.

With that, I would like to invite Barb to just share a little bit about where she is right now in her life, and then we'll take it from there. Maybe you want to welcome her. [applause]

### **Barb Zanzig:**

Gee, thanks. [laughter] How are you? Good. I'm a little nervous, so bear with me. In preparing for today, I've spent a lot of time reflecting on the past few years of my life. And because I have been stable and not in crisis mode, as my dad would sometimes call it, it's difficult to remember how sick I was. When my dad and I first spoke at the LA Congress in 2006, it had only been a few years since I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. At that time, I was just beginning to understand the disease and how it was continuing to impact my life. A little bit later, I'm going to say more about my experience with the disease, both the horrific parts of my story as well as the more hopeful times that I'm now living in.

But at the end of the day, I am and will always be bipolar. I think this is really important not to forget. We're never cured of a mental illness, and part of dealing with it successfully is acknowledging that fact. But being bipolar no longer controls my life. It is a part of who I am. It is a disease that I have to manage. But it doesn't define me. Through patience, time, information and love, I'm learning to manage my disease. So I want to be very clear that the disease has not gone away. But now I'm able to recognize when something just doesn't feel right. I'm able to recognize and even predict when I may be cycling again. With those red flags appearing, I know that it means it's time for a med adjustment and to touch base with a therapist.

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I've learned life-saving coping mechanisms and have a support network that helps me keep the disease in check. But as you'll hear in a few minutes, it's been a long, painful process to get here. I want you to know that, as we begin, that I'm no longer fragile and I can speak about my life with honesty and freedom. That, too, is healing and liberating and one reason why Dad and I are so grateful to be here today with you. To know that, in just sharing our story, we might not only be able to help you, but a lot of people you will touch in the future. So thank you for inviting us here today.

Now my Dad's going to share a few thoughts about some of our assumptions and convictions as we developed this presentation. [applause]

**Tom:** Isn't she swell? ([laughter] I'm a real proud papa. I should say, too, that for our presentation, we're going to keep pretty tightly scripted, in part because Barb's not a professional speaker but she's also going to be using a lot of stories and excerpts from her journals as she was going through all of this. Also in order to control ourselves, because I'm one of those people who says, "that reminds me of a story," and before I know it I'm off into never-never land. Thank you. I've got some right up here. Thank you. That kind of spins me off into never-never land, so the first part of this is going to be pretty tightly scripted. And also because we're dealing with really delicate kinds of stuff, and saying the things the right way is really important when we get into this. So thanks for your patience with that as well.

So here are some of the assumptions that Barb and I talked about as we started to say, how are we going to frame this? How are we going to tell our story? And our first assumption is that mental illness is almost always heartbreaking. And it is sometimes death-dealing. And one of the things we said is we don't want in any way to sugarcoat that or to become kind of pietistic about it. This is not something you can pray away, although some people have told us we can do that. And we're not going to be offering pie-in-the-sky platitudes and Jesus loves you and everything's going to be just fine. That's true. [laughter] It's just not what you want to hear when you're in the middle of a crisis.

One of my spiritual gurus is Richard Rohr. I hear some verbal nods. Richard said, excuse me, one of the reasons that I don't try to drink is my hands shake at the start of a presentation. See if that works. Barb went and got me some hot water. It's the one thing I learned from Ronald Reagan is that, as a speaker, if you drink hot water before you speak, it helps. But in any case – I don't want to follow Ronald right at the moment. [laughter]

Richard Rohr says this: "All great spirituality is about what we do with our pain." All great spirituality is about what we do with our pain. And then he adds this line: if we do not transform our pain, we will transmit it in one form or another. That's really a powerful and wonderful line, that all great spirituality is about how we deal with our pain, whether we bury it or confront it and share it and so on. And if we don't find a way to transform the pain of our life into something positive and life giving, we will transmit it. So if you repress it, it's going to explode on you at some point.

I mentioned that mental illness is often heartbreaking. And when I think of heartbreaking, I think of—another one of my spiritual gurus is Parker Palmer. And he's done some wonderful work on this. He's a Quaker and a religious educator. And he wrote a wonderful

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essay that later became part of one of his books right after 9/11. And he talked about heartbreak and how you deal with it. And he mentions the obvious fact that pain is inevitable. It's part of life. You can't avoid it. Some people have more of it than others, but pain is just part of life. The question is not whether you're going to have pain. It's what you're going to do with it.

And he said that there are a couple ways that you can experience heartbreak. And he says sometimes the heart breaks apart. And he uses this stunning image or metaphor. He says when the heart breaks apart, it sends out shards of pain like emotional shrapnel that fly in all directions and hurt primarily the people nearest to us. What a powerful image: that sometimes, when the heart breaks, the heart shatters, the heart breaks apart and sends out shards of emotional shrapnel.

He said, but the heart can also break open. And when the heart breaks open rather than apart, the heart starts to take in more. It becomes more tender. We become more compassionate. We become more inclusive. We become less judgmental. Anybody who has suffered through mental illness or any other great pain finds it virtually impossible to laugh at anybody else, to reject anybody else, because the pain has opened your heart. It has softened you, if it hasn't broken you apart.

One thing that Parker doesn't say that I would add is that sometimes the heart breaks down. And if you're lucky, you can come out of that. It's kind of the hitting bottom that many people in therapy talk about. And we fall apart and have to turn to somebody else for help. But sometimes we break down, and we die. And that's just the reality. So again we're not here to talk about pie-in-the-sky kinds of spirituality.

This is our attempt to tell the story of how our experience with mental illness broke us open rather than breaking us apart, and that has allowed for us a breakthrough of the Spirit of God. And we believe that that can happen for other people as well. I would stress that we offer insights into that. We don't offer answers, because I don't know, especially in spirituality, people who give me pat answers to spiritual questions I tend to walk away from pretty quickly. Matters of the heart, matters of the spirit often defy logical answers and pat answers, but wisdom is available if we develop the eyes to see.

About 400 years ago, the French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal said this. He said, "the heart has its reasons that reason does not know." And I think what we're going to be sharing with you are some of the things that we've learned as much by heart as we have by head.

So with that, I welcome back Barb.

**Barb:** I'm just going to take off my heels. I don't know who I'm trying to kid. [laughter] Oh, so much better. Okay. I'd like to begin with an excerpt from a book by Kay Redfield Jamison. Her book *An Unquiet Mind* has been a wonderful resource for me. I find it so encouraging. Kay is bipolar, and she is also a professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University. Although she has a much more severe form of bipolar disorder than I do, I relate really well to her story and it helps me name a lot of things that I probably am not ready to name myself.

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Here is how Kay ends her book:

I have often asked myself whether, given the choice, I would choose to have manic depressive illness. Strangely enough, I think I would choose to have it. It's complicated. Depression bleeds relationships through suspicion, lack of confidence, self-respect, the inability to enjoy life, to walk, to talk or think normally, the exhaustion. There is nothing good to be said about it, except that it gives you the experience of how it must feel to be old; to be old and sick, to be dying, to be slow of mind, to be lacking in grace, polish, and coordination, to be ugly, to have no belief in the possibilities of life, the exquisiteness of music or the ability to make yourself and others laugh.

Depression is flat, hollow, and endurable. It is also tiresome. You're irritable and paranoid and humorless and lifeless and critical and demanding, and no reassurance is ever enough. You're frightened and you're frightening, and you're not at all like yourself, but you know you will be soon, but you know you won't.

So why would I want anything to do with this illness? Because I honestly believe that, as a result of it, I've felt more things more deeply, had more experiences more intensely, loved more and been more loved, laughed more often for having cried more often, appreciated more the springs for all the winters. I've seen the finest and the most terrible in people and slowly learned the values of caring, loyalty, and seeing things through.

I have seen the breadth, the depth and the width of my mind and heart. Depressed, I have crawled on my hands and knees in order to get across the room and have done it month after month. But normal or manic, I have run faster, thought faster, and loved faster than most I know, and I think much of this is related to my illness.

I feel like Kay really names what it's like for a person with bipolar disorder. But in this presentation, I want to try and describe in my own words what the disease has been like for me. By no means has it been easy. In fact, in the past, it has at times been difficult for me to even stay alive. [cough] Excuse me. I'm shaky too.

Before I start to share my story, I want to say that I'll be reading quite a bit of this to you, and that's partly because a lot of what I have to share comes from my journals and other readings that have meant a lot to me, but it's also because a lot of this is tough to talk about and I want to make sure that I say things right. So thank you for your patience.

When I was 20 years old, I was a student at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I don't even know if you could call me a student. I rarely was able to get out of bed before 1:00. When I did go to class, I remember feeling like I didn't belong there: just going through the motions with no direction, hazy all the time, no concentration, panic attacks when taking tests, failing them, and then inevitably dropping the class. I remember feeling lost. I compensated by going out a lot. When I drank, I felt more normal, more loose.

Looking back now, the fact that something was wrong seems so obvious. I know now that my complete exhaustion, even though I slept 12 to 16 hours a day, should have been a red

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flag. I now know that my racing thoughts were a symptom, not a sign of being flighty. I now know that my inability to concentrate did not mean that I was stupid. I now know that feeling disposable, boring, paranoid, guilty, were symptoms, not personality traits. But I didn't know any of that back then.

To compensate for those feelings, I drank. I spent money I didn't have, which got me into horrible situations. I smoked marijuana in an attempt to either bring myself up or bring myself down. It wasn't until my mid-20s that I began using cocaine on a regular basis. I still remem. . . [crying] I didn't think this was going to happen this time. I still remember one of the worst days of my life, when I had to ask my dad for \$1,500 to pay off a drug dealer.

Aside from money, drugs, and alcohol, there were issues with weight. Now I have tears in my eyes and I can't see. [laughter] Oh, my God, what a wreck. Aside from. . .

**Tom:** This might take longer than [inaudible].

**Barb:** [laughter] Aside from money, drugs, and alcohol, there were issues with weight. My first year in college, I gained 30 pounds, but I didn't mind. I felt good about myself. I had a boyfriend who loved me, when I was 18. When I was 21, that all changed. I became obsessed with weight. I discovered bulimia. I lost the 30 pounds and then some, probably a combination of throwing up and cocaine.

My sophomore year of college, I was raped in an after bar. Like many women who are raped, I felt like somehow I must have provoked it. I was drunk and in a bad place at a bad time. I put it behind me, I thought. It says something about my relationship with my dad that I was able to tell him about the rape but no one else. I can't imagine what that must have been like for him, but he was very supportive. I thought I took care of things and that I could put the rape behind me.

Then my junior year, a year in which I was an RA in my dorm, something happened. I was out one night and saw the man who raped me the year before. I remember coming back to my dorm and for the first time feeling like killing myself. In a panic, I called my dad. I think it was about 2:00 in the morning. He rushed down to Madison in the middle of the night and over the next few days helped me cope. I started therapy the next week.

I was diagnosed with depression and for the first time started taking medication to help me deal with my situation. I later learned that this was the wrong diagnosis and the wrong medication, but it was a start. Over the next few years, I stayed in Madison but dropped out of school. I felt like a phony, smiling, acting like everything was fine. Inside I was falling apart.

When I was 24, I convinced my parents that I wanted to move to Minneapolis and go to the Aveda Institute. The Aveda Institute is an exceptional school that teaches aesthetics, massage therapy, and cosmetology. School was okay. I still wasn't sure what I was doing was right, but it didn't matter. It didn't matter because I loved Minneapolis and I loved my life. I loved my apartment, my friends. I was constantly partying, and it was fun at first. The drugs, the alcohol, the fast-paced life is all a blur now.

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When I was 25, I again was in the wrong place at the wrong time. My friend and I ended up in a beautiful downtown apartment. I remember being drunk and doing lines of coke in the bathroom. The next thing I remember is being unable to move my body but being aware of what was happening. My mind was going in and out, and everything was blurry. I was raped by three men that night.

This horrific experience was the breaking point. I vaguely remember the day after this happened. I remember crying and talking to my dad on the phone, and he pleaded with me to go to the hospital. I did. That's when I found out I had been slipped GHB, a date-rape drug, which explains why I was unable to move.

I think about a month had passed. I called my dad in Winona, Minnesota, about 100 miles south of Minneapolis, where he lived and worked at the time. I thought I was calling to just say hello and check in. I left a message for him. I thought I sounded okay, but apparently I didn't. I later learned that Dad asked a friend of his to listen to the voicemail message that I had left, and asked her if he should feel as scared for me as he did. She said yes.

My dad called me that afternoon and just said, "Honey, I'm coming to take you home." I remember feeling numb, but so grateful that finally someone was coming to take care of me. I was incapable of making any decision and needed someone to do it for me.

A month prior to this, I had attempted suicide by taking a bunch of pills. I can still taste them. I threw up, thankfully. I really believe that, if my dad had not come to get me, I would have tried again and would have made sure that this time I did it right.

After Dad told me he was coming to get me, I went into my bedroom and fell asleep. The next thing I remember is Dad walking into my dark bedroom. He sat on the edge of the bed and held me. I remember feeling so weak that it took everything in me just to hug him.

After my dad brought me home to Winona, I started to see a psychiatrist and a therapist. I remember sleeping a lot. I started to take medication for bipolar disorder. Excuse me again. These napkins are great.[laughter] He usually brings a hankie that I snag, but not today. Okay.

I started to take medication for bipolar disorder. This was the first time I was properly diagnosed and taking the right medications to treat my disease; long overdue but grateful that I was getting the help that I desperately needed. It took several months for the side effects to lessen. In the year that I lived with my dad in Winona, amidst a lot of pain, healing began to take place. One thing I know now is that I never lost hope. Slowly my heart began to mend. In the midst of all of this pain, I was able to find grace and God.

A little bit later, I'm going to share some more stories about how I've learned some of these things, but for now I can say this: God does not fix us but gives us strength by suffering with us. One of the images that I keep with me is something my dad shared with me for the first time after being raped in Minneapolis. We were talking on the phone, and as I rocked back and forth crying, sobbing, my dad prayed with me over the phone. And then he said something that might sound surprising, but it made sense to my heart. He didn't

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ask me to pray that God would take away my pain. Instead he asked me to picture Jesus crying with me, sitting with me. The comfort and peace of that image was palpable.

As I continued my therapy, I started to be honest with myself for the first time, going through the hard work, the therapy, the diagnosis of bipolar disorder, my truth. I remember the first time my dad told me be kind to yourself. That advice became more and more important to me: be kind to yourself. The gentleness in that phrase is at times too much to bear.

So through all of those years and all of that pain, through the grace of God and the love of my dad and others, I did not become hardened. My heart did not break apart. I was able to feel grace and experience a kind of comfort and peace that I had never known. I'll share more about that, how that happened, later. But first, my dad is going to share some of the spiritual lessons he's learned through all of this. [applause]

**Tom:** One of the lessons is, you hug as much as you can. It's obvious, the pain doesn't go away. The fact that we haven't told the story in a couple years, I think, is why this is so emotional right now for both of us, but it's another lesson. The pain doesn't go away. You just learn to deal with it and learn from it and go deeper and deeper and deeper – sometimes deeper into the pain, but there is healing there, there is hope there.

I've probably learned 1,000 spiritual lessons from going through this journey with Barb. There's lessons of the heart that I mentioned before. There are four of them, though, that stand out for me. And I'm going to read the lessons, the statement of the lessons, because they're pretty rich. And I'm sorry I didn't put this on a handout for you, but you got a tape. Barb, if you would get some more napkins, that would be a good thing. [laughter] Oh, and she found Kleenex. This will not be nearly enough. It's true I never forget a handkerchief until this morning.

Here is the first lesson: that Barb's mental illness has forced me to grow in my capacity for compassion, forgiveness, and hope, many of the qualities that I claim to desire as a Christian but might never learn, and certainly would never learn as deeply without the experience of Barb's bipolar disorder and living with that.

As a parent, whenever Barb and I have gone through these times of crisis, I always move through these expected responses that you would think would be true of all parents and all loved ones: fear, sometimes bordering on absolute terror, sadness, frustration, anger, confusion and doubt, and lots of guilt—you know, the voice saying, why didn't you see this coming? Why didn't you protect her?

No counselor has ever been able to help me answer those questions, questions like these. When does support and caring become codependency and enablement? When should my love for Barb start to look like tough love? When does legitimate support become bailing out and an invitation to irresponsibility? The bottom line is, how do you hold an ill person accountable as a parent? Where do you draw the line? When do you get tough? When do you say, another one of those moments and you're out of here? No counselor has ever been able to name that line.

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So for my own sake as much as for Barb's, I finally settled on a basic principle, and it's the first spiritual lesson I would offer you: that despite the attraction toward anger and frustration and fear, I always try now to opt first for compassion, for love, for patience, for trust. I try to make those the habits of my heart, my first impulse. If the other emotions come—the anger and the disappointment and the frustration—that's fine. They can come later. But I don't want to react on the basis of those kinds of feeling.

I said that mental illness almost forced me to learn some of that, but the fact is, I think it's probably more accurate to say that I've chosen to react this way and I've had to practice reacting this way. I've consciously decided that I would rather have my heart broken open than broken apart. In the midst of a crisis, my first and my primary goal is to keep her alive. How do I know, how do I let her know how much I love her? I have certainly had times when anger and frustration and fear have shot out shards of emotional shrapnel that have hurt Barb and my family. And I can accept that as just part of being human. But it's not who I want to be. It's not the kind of person I want to be.

I can accept that, as a human being, I'm going to have times when I don't live up to my own expectations, but I want to have this first response of my heart to be toward compassion, forgiveness, and trust. And I would say that returning to trust is probably for me the hardest part, because you have to return to it over and over and over again, and trust is broken over and over and over again, and that you get to a point where you say, "Not again, I can't do this," but then your heart says yes, you can.

I've noticed that something wonderful happens when you try to live this way and you keep practicing attitudes like that. Almost imperceptibly, day by day, you start to change. And over time, you grow in the capacity to respond that way. They become more natural tendencies of your heart, less artificial. And I think in some ways—maybe this is some way to assuage the guilt that can be part of this—another side effect of this is that, when I act this way, I can look at myself in the mirror and feel better about myself, and I can sleep better at night. So that's the first lesson, to train yourself to react as compassionately as you can over time.

Second one: as a Christian parent, I have learned sometimes uncomfortably, and this is a little embarrassing to admit, sometimes uncomfortably, I've learned to speak about, affirm the value of and overtly express my deepest faith convictions. Many of you are professional ministers and you probably understand this, but despite the fact that ministry has been, professional ministry, has been my life for 43 years or something like that, and despite the fact that I've had a pretty public religious role, I've sometimes avoided overt religious expressions and talk with my own kids, in part because I didn't want to come off like I was preaching at them. I didn't want to be their religious educator rather than their parent, and so I've avoided it.

I think it's also kind of what they call the preacher's syndrome, if you will, that knowing that our children at some time have to reject a lot of what we've shared with them in order to discover their own self, I think I feared being too religious for fear that, when they rejected me, they would reject what I believed in as well. And so I kind of avoided all of that.

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But I've learned that sometimes the greatest thing I could do for Barb, sometimes the only thing I could do for Barb, was to express my own deep convictions in a loving God and witness to the hope and meaning that my faith gives me. There were times that's all I had. I had no other answers.

When Barb's in crisis, she may not be able to experience or believe in the presence of a loving God, but I can, and I have to. And in a sense, I have to do it for both of us. So my advice to parents and relatives and other loved ones of those who are in crisis, if you are a person of faith, don't be afraid to share it and express it, even if it means sounding preachy. Your convictions may be the only thing they can hold onto at that moment, but it's got to come from your heart. It can't just be out of a book somehow. They have to hear the faith coming out of your own depths.

Barb is going to say a bit more about what this has meant to her as she's gone through this journey, but here are a few examples of what I mean. She just alluded to this, actually. I can recall one time I was at a conference in New Orleans, and I called her. And I could, she just sounded that way. [laughter] And parents and loved ones know the voice, the voice of someone, it doesn't matter what they say, doesn't matter how much they try to hide it, you just hear in the voice the pain that's there, and it sends a chill up your spine. And I felt so far away from her and separated. She was in Minneapolis, I in New Orleans.

And I said to her, I said, "Barb, I'm scared, and my guess is you are too. And would it be okay if I prayed?" I had never done that before, with anybody. And she said, "Yes." And I said okay, let's just sit for a minute in silence. And we sat on the phone in silence for a couple minutes. And then I just said whatever was in my heart. I have no idea what I said. All I know is I prayed, and I prayed for both of us. That may have kept her alive that night. It may be why she's here today.

I have also tried to share with Barb some of my own techniques, things that have gotten me through my own crises. You may have picked up and wondered about this. When I went to bring her home, you may have wondered, where is her mother in all of this? And we had gone through a separation and then a divorce before a lot of the crises, so I was living alone at the point when I came to get her in Minneapolis. But in any case, I remember sharing with her, while we lived together for about a year and a half, some of the techniques that I had used to deal with my own crisis and my own struggle with faith—the deaths of dear friends. I lost three close friends in about 16 months back about the same time.

And it really is true that, when Paul talks about in your weakness is your strength, it's an amazing thing. I found one of the most healing things I could do for Barb was to stop pretending I was so strong and fall apart with her and let her hug me and let her know that I needed her help to get me through the tough times. And I think knowing that gave her a sense of meaning. So don't try to be the rock all the time. Just be yourself, walk the journey, and do it as honestly as you can.

Another example. I have constantly tried to affirm hope in her life, and I can't tell you how many times I've held her in my arms and whispered over and over and over again, "You can make it, you can make it. I believe you can make it." And I can remember the first time. I wonder if Barb can. This was before all the crises, was back when she was, I think,

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probably a freshman in high school and going through a lot of the tough times of adolescence and feeling rejected and so on. I remember the first time these words came out of my mouth, and I repeated them many times over the years as I was holding and she was crying. I said, “You can make it. The Creator of the universe loves you and believes in you more than I ever can.” And those words, too, have kept her alive, I think.

At times I have recommended books to her, probably at times inappropriately. [laughter] Here’s a good book. I’ve told her stories about faith. I’ve read excerpts of books to her. That reminds me, and I run to my bookshelf and get the book. I think she just puts up with some of that sometimes, but it’s, some people have better words than I do for talking about all this stuff.

But here’s a huge caution in all of this: we don’t share our own faith in order to convert them. The goal of all of this is not to make them Christian, not to get them to the point of believing in Jesus. Barb today is not sure she’s a Christian. We definitely agree that she is not a practicing Catholic. [laughter] But she has found God and, or maybe been found by God.

So we don’t witness to our faith in order to change them, but to let them know that we believe in something and that we are rooted ourselves and grounded ourselves in the truth that we’ve accepted. It’s not about changing them, but giving them something or someone to hold onto when it seems like the world is falling apart. So I encourage you, as long as it comes out of your heart, share our own faith.

Third one: parenting a child or walking with a friend with mental illness is a constant call to one’s own conversion. You are constantly challenged to change yourself. The sheer terror of parenting a child through crisis can lead us to our own—I hope this isn’t an inappropriate phrase—but our own bipolar spiritual awakening, one that Jesus himself experienced and I think demonstrated throughout his life.

On the one pole, this bipolar spiritual awakening, on the one pole, we have to learn over and over again our near absolute powerlessness, our sometimes devastating inability to protect the one we love. I obviously couldn’t protect Barb from everything she went through. I would have given my life to protect her from that, but I couldn’t. I spent a lot of time thinking and praying about this.

And this may be a scary thought to some of you—for me it was very liberating—I prayed a lot about the fact that Abba, the father of Jesus, apparently couldn’t protect his own child either. People don’t want to hear that. They don’t want to hear about the powerlessness of God. It scares them because of some of the images they have. I got to tell you, that has saved me many times and given me insights into God and God’s relationship with me that I don’t think I would have found any other way.

This is oversimplified and perhaps too baldly stated, but I would rather. . . Oh, good, now I’m bleeding too. [laughter] More napkins, please.

**Barb:** Oh, my God. What a pair.

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**Tom:** Isn't this fun? Do you think they feel a lot of confidence in us right. . . [laughter] Oh, lesson number 69: never stop laughing. Never stop laughing. Back to this powerful theological point I was about to make, that I would much rather believe in and be freed by a God who is powerless to help me, but weeps with me, than a God who could do something and chooses not to. And I think it is the whole point of the Paschal Mystery.

There's some profound lesson here that, I learned it when my best friend was dying and I sat at his bedside, and I felt like how can this be happening? He's 40 years old. He's the most wonderful person I've ever known. How can God be here? And I told my spiritual director, "I'm really struggling with this." And she said, "Tom, I want you to try something." And she said, "I want you, the next time you're sitting next to Jeff and feeling powerless, I want you to imagine Jesus sitting next to you and crying with you because he can't do anything either. And it was so freeing to do that. That's a lesson of the heart. Doesn't make sense in your head, perhaps, but it's a lesson in the heart and obviously one that I've shared with Barb as well.

It is also the bipolar nature of this, that we learn our absolute powerlessness but the other side of that is how liberating it is to embrace, as a gift, our total reliance on God, in part because it relieves us of the responsibility, that we can't fix it, God can't fix it. It's a matter of moving into that pain, leaning into it, as some say, and learning from it.

I have said a prayer a thousand, thousand times out of sheer desperation. It's become kind of my default mantra, and it's straight from Jesus. "Into your hands, I give my life. Into your hands, I give my life," over and over and over again. There were times in crisis when I shared that with Barb too, and she's found it as freeing as I have. All of a sudden there's this burden lifted from our back, the burden of thinking that we have to be perfect, that we have to have all the answers, that we have to fix people. We just recognize that we can't, and embrace the gift of that recognition.

And then my fourth and final lesson, that I'm going to share with you, anyway, is that my struggle to accept my own powerlessness and to more and more turn my life over to God has led me to deeper levels of trust in the entire universe. A genuine and liberating conviction that somehow, as the great 14<sup>th</sup> century English mystic Julian of Norwich put it, "All shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

This too is a lesson of the heart that's hard to express really, but somehow going through this whole thing with Barb has led me to the point—and not pie in the sky, not simplicity—well, it is simple, it's going to be okay. It's going to be okay. You got to remember that Julian wrote that and believed in it in the middle of the Black Plague, when about a third of the human race was being wiped out, and she lived in a little hovel next to a cathedral. And that's when she came up with the conviction that all shall be well. Where did that come from? I think there's a piece of that that I'm starting to get to myself, and it's only because of Barb and going through this that I think I've learned it.

I mentioned I think that I went through some therapy earlier in my life and worked with a wonderful therapist through the whole transition of going through the divorce. In fact it was at the end of that three-year process. I didn't want it to end because I loved the guy so

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dearly. He was tragically killed in a car accident a few years ago. I'd be going back to him right now if he were around.

But I went through this process with, his name was Jim, I went through this process of going through my divorce, and we were coming to the end when we had to say this is it, now it's time to move on. And it was then that Barb was raped for the first time. And I went back to Jim and I said, "I think I better stay with you for a while." And he walked with me through all of that as well.

And over the years, when he was still with us, once in a while, when I went through tough times, I'd call up Jim and I'd say, "Jim, I think I need a tune-up." We had talked about just becoming friends at one point and maybe even working together. He had a great love for adolescents and a gift for working with them. And we used to talk about maybe someday, when I get through this, we can work together. And we decided no. He said, "I'd rather be your safety valve." He said, "If we become friends, I can't be your counselor."

And so once in a while, I would call him up and say, "I think I need a tune-up." And that happened when I moved to Madison and left the company I had worked with for 25 years and was feeling awfully lonely and kind of disoriented. And so I started to go back to Jim for a series of about six sessions, one a week for six weeks. He worked in La Crosse, which is about 100 miles from Madison and about 25 miles from Winona.

And at the end of that series of sessions with him, I said to him, "Jim, I can't explain this but this is what I feel like right now. Barb may not make it. She may kill herself. And I'll be okay." And Jim looked at me with this kind of amazed look on his face, and we both started to tear up. And it was like he was saying, that was the step. That's the one you had to take. And we knew that something pretty amazing had happened there. And all I can say is it's a liberating thing to get to that point. It sounds painful, I know, but it's a liberating kind of thing. Obviously I wasn't saying by that that I no longer cared about her, that I no longer loved her. There was something deeper going on.

Now, by coincidence, but I think we can call it grace, I had, as I went to that last session with Jim, called Barb and said, "Are you around? Maybe we can do lunch." So she said, "Yes," she was. And so I left Jim's office and I drove 25 more miles to Winona and had lunch with Barb. And all the time I was driving there, I was thinking, should I tell Barb what just happened? This could really come off wrong. It could be scary to her. And I just said, Tom, just trust yourself. Trust your gut.

So we had this wonderful lunch and a great conversation, and then at one point I said to her, Barb, there's something that just happened with Jim. By the way, Jim was the one I took Barb to the day I brought her home from Minneapolis, and he saved her life, I think we would agree. And I said, "Something just happened with Jim, and I don't know how to say it. I don't know if I should share it with you." And she said, "Well, tell me what it is and we'll talk about it." And I said, "I just went through this session and I have come to the point where I can honestly tell you that, if you don't make it and if you decide to kill yourself, I'm going to be okay."

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And she got a look on her face like I hadn't seen before, and it wasn't the one I expected. It was a look of joy. It was a look of relief. And she said, "That may be the most wonderful thing you've ever said to me." I was pretty much shocked by that reaction. And I think it's a testimony as well to her own spiritual depth. And I said, "Can you tell me why? Why you feel that way?"

And she said, "Well, you've just told me that I'm not responsible for your happiness. I've spent most of my life feeling guilty about what I've done to our family and to hurt you and to hurt Mom and to hurt Adam, about all the things I've done to ruin our family. And you're telling me that it's not my job to make you happy." And she's absolutely right. She was then. She is today. It's a powerful lesson. I think we learn it in the Gospel, but it's got to be learned in our heart in a much deeper way. It is again, "Into your hands I give my life."

But here's the thing that I noticed that was much more difficult for me, and probably for you as well. I thought I had gotten to the point where I could say the prayer and mean it in the depth of my heart, "Into your hands I give my life." What I had a harder time doing was saying, "Into your hands I give her life," and to believe it just as deeply. But I remember there is a God, the Creator of the universe, who loves you more than I can ever dream of loving you, and it's into that God's hands that we place ourselves and we place our children. I told you about my default prayer, "Into your hands, I give my life." I try to start every day with that. I try to end every day with that. You might find it helpful yourself.

Barb is going to be now coming back and sharing some of the spiritual insights she gained from all this, but I think it would help us and perhaps you if we take just a stretch break. You're going to get another longer break in about 15, 20 minutes, but why don't we just stand up for a minute and stretch? So let's begin. Here's Barb again.

**Barb:** One of the best things that I've done for myself is starting a journal. Not only is it therapeutic, it's an amazing resource in discovering who we really are, or at least who we were when we wrote it. I want to share a special entry from my journal about an experience I had shortly after moving back to Winona to live with my dad—a very special encounter I had with a very ordinary tree.

In it, I refer to a movie, *American Beauty*, an Oscar winner in 1999 for Best Picture, with Kevin Spacey and Annette Bening. One theme of the movie deals with the family's young adolescent daughter Jane and her relationship with a classmate and next-door-neighbor named Ricky. Along with being a drug dealer, the boy is an avid video maker. One day Jane is visiting Ricky, and he asks if she would like to see the most beautiful thing he had ever filmed. And she says yes; and he pulls out one of his many videos from a shelf and puts it in the player.

They sit together quietly and watch the tape. The scene is of a dirty, dreary alley, and Ricky had videotaped a small plastic bag and some old leaves being slowly blown by the breeze, almost dancing together. When the tape stops, Ricky says that it was at that moment that he realized that there is a life behind everything that exists. And then he says, with tears in his eyes, "Sometimes there is so much beauty in the world, I can hardly take it."

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With that scene in mind, here is a long entry from my journal dated February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2001, that tries to capture one of the most amazing and transformative experiences of my life. This is what I wrote:

Tonight I shared the story of the tree with my dad. I needed to tell him what happened when he was away on his trip. We sat in the living room, and I began to tell him about my moment, my moment with the tree. Here's what happened. I was sitting on my dad's couch in the living room. It was late. I had just finished watching *American Beauty*. I turned off the TV and got ready for bed. As soon as I turned off the TV, I was struck by a light coming through the windows. It was this bluish gray light, and I was amazed by how bright it was, even without the sun shining. It was snowing, but it looked almost gray outside, like a black-and-white picture.

I noticed a tree that stood in front of my dad's porch. As I stood in the middle of the living room, something washed over me. I started to cry, to sob, actually, because of how beautiful it was. I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for every moment of my life. Every breath is a gift. It is about so much more than our lives. It's about God, about the universe, about love. It was and is so real.

As I cried, I spoke out loud. The presence of God was so real, I spoke out loud. I asked for forgiveness for all of the things that I had done that may have hurt my family, my friends, and myself. I felt grace immediately after. He was with me. For all of the fear, for all of the confusion that is inside of me, I knew at that moment that I was not alone, nor would I be if I kept what was real close to my heart. And for the first time in a long time, I felt safe. I felt good. I felt okay. Something real was happening. I could feel it.

The feeling of you, God, my father, you love me more than even my own father and mother. You made me who I am and have given me this past year so that I could find it. Deep breath. Thank you, thank you, thank you. My heart is with all of those who feel pain because they are sick. May this incredible grace be with them too. Whether through dreams, music, trees, love, tears, may they please have a moment like this. The plastic bag dancing in the wind, that is my moment with the tree. Sometimes there is so much beauty in the world, I can hardly take it.

That's the end of the journal entry.

One of the most influential experiences in my life was the moment with the tree. That moment is what continues to get me through difficult times. It isn't possible that I could forget. I have to be faithful to the memory, be loyal to what happened. The idea is not to hold onto the feeling, but instead to hold onto the conviction of being unconditionally loved by the God who made us.

It wasn't until four years after my experience with the tree that I realized I had not forgotten it. That memory is what carried me through the grief of losing a very special friend to a horrific accident—the anniversary of that was eight years ago, two days ago—a kind of pain that I have never in my life experienced, a kind of grief, so, so deep, a kind of

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pain where you can literally feel your heart breaking. But my heart did not break apart. It broke open.

I'd like to share one more journal entry with you. I wrote this two months after 9/11. It was written after my moment with the tree but before the death of my friend and my move back to Madison, Wisconsin, where I live now. I'd been living with my dad in Winona for a little over a year. Here is my journal entry for November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001:

Last Sunday, I was feeling so incredibly awful, noticed sleep patterns and dreams changing again. It was about 11:30 p.m. and the night was beautiful and warm, unusual for November. I really needed to cry, to feel some touch of God, to feel anything. Suicidal thoughts are all coming back. I remembered my tree. I always try to remember my tree when I feel like this.

So I sat in my dad's living room. I put on some James Taylor, some Van Morrison, and Stevie Wonder. I sat on the floor of the room right by the window. The near-full moon was shining between the branches of the tree. Stars were so bright, sprinkles of light between the branches of my tree. Earlier tonight, I read from the book that Dad gave me. I read a prayer about pain and suffering—really fit my mood and where I was at in my head. I was able to cry a lot. Let it go, let it go. I spoke out loud to God. And like the prayer said, I could almost feel his arms around me rocking me.

Then I began to do the mantra my dad taught me: Into your hands I give my life. Into your hands I give my life. I was deep in prayer. Only by experiencing such all-consuming grief can we be healed, being so aware in these moments that we can realize we are being touched by tenderness.

I realized at this moment that I was not alone. God was with me. As I sat on the floor, I found myself tapping my fingers along with the music, feeling the rhythm, unaware I was doing it, a trait I'm sure came from my grandma Mary, my dad's mom. The power of music astounds me. "How Sweet It Is to Be Loved by You" was playing. I started to listen and began to smile. I usually thought of it as a love song between myself and a partner. Tonight, however, my partner was God. I stood up, and I started to dance around the living room, lit up by the moon. I felt a little silly, but then I really let myself go, singing, dancing, laughing, crying, dancing with God. Miracle, coincidence, I didn't care. I slept like a baby that night.

When I needed the shelter of someone's arms, you were there. I just want to stop and thank you, thank you for all of the beautiful moments and gifts you have given me. I must remember this when I am sad and alone. It really is sweet to be loved by you.

I'd like to close this part of our presentation by naming just a few of the lessons I've learned in coping with the mental illness of bipolar disorder. It's now about 10 years since I was properly diagnosed and started to get the guidance and medication that I needed to cope with the disease. The first couple of years were the hardest. While I was grateful and relieved to be getting the help that I finally needed, it was certainly a time of adjustment.

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The first two years were filled with biweekly therapist appointments and psychiatrist appointments, countless changes in medication as we were trying to find the best one for my body chemistry. The constant changes in meds led to many unpleasant side effects. I had many changes in my lifestyle too, which required a move, a job change, and ending many unhealthy relationships.

But as the years went by, I did in fact learn to adjust. I was dedicated to learning how to manage and live with bipolar disorder. The horrible side effects from the medication lessened, so much so that they're barely recognizable now. I formed an incredible and loving support network of new, healthy relationships.

Just two weeks ago, I got engaged. [laughter, applause] He's been a friend of 18 years and has seen me go through everything, and it's pretty special. I'm really lucky. Things have never been better or looked brighter in terms of my career. Overall, I'm genuinely happy, and I feel an incredible sense of peace. I feel grounded, and I feel like I have healthy coping mechanisms to deal with the ups and downs that arise in anybody's life.

In learning to live with mental illness, there are a few basic things that have helped give me control—and not the disease itself. Number one, I've learned that even the routine and apparently simple decisions that we make on a daily basis influence the course the disease will take. These decisions about what I eat, how much sleep I get, how I spend my free time, everything, affect whether or not my symptoms are going to get better or worse, whether I will stay well or fall into a relapse, and also determine how quickly I can recover from a manic or depressive cycle. It's a cliché, but people with mental illness really must live one day at a time.

Number two, in managing my illness, the most crucial element is my commitment to receive and then follow sound medical help. Managing this disease begins with a combination of therapy and medication, but no one can make me listen to the therapist or take my medication. I have to do that. It is up to me to take the action needed to keep my mood stabilized. It is up to me to ask for help when I need it and to take my meds as they are prescribed.

Number three, I've learned it's really helpful to learn as much as you can about whatever mental illness you're diagnosed with. Educating myself about the sickness has not only helped me deal with the illness itself but empowers me to make better decisions in all areas of my life.

As we mentioned earlier, it's been incredibly liberating to share our story openly and honestly, and I love listening to other stories from all of you as well. Only by sharing our stories can we begin to break the stigma that's attached to mental illness. It's so important.

Another lesson: we all need a support network. Becoming well and stable is up to me, with the help of my caregivers, but having support from others is essential too, especially when I'm cycling. I need someone to turn to when I'm feeling off, someone I've developed an open, honest relationship with. Then that person may learn to recognize the symptoms in

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me even before I do. Whether it's one person or even a bipolar support group, it's crucial to have support.

And my last big lesson: I have hope now. I'm living proof that it is possible to have a mental illness and still have long periods of living happily and well. Believing in myself and knowing that I can cope when things get rough is incredibly empowering. I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I'm really confident that I can handle it. I would not have been able to say that 10 years ago.

All of us know, whether we have mental illness or not, that life will bring heartache and pain. When those times come, it can seem impossible to see the light at the end of the tunnel. But if we are patient, if we are kind to ourselves and make an absolute commitment to not giving up, we begin to know in our heart that things will in fact get better. We just need to hang on, lean into the pain and never give up hope.

Now my dad will explain the next part of the workshop. Thanks for listening. [applause]

**Tom:** Isn't she special? I decided, as Barb was wrapping up, that I'm going to give you the lay of the land here for the rest of our time together rather than bringing you back and then explaining it all. You might want to move into this sooner rather than later. We are going to be taking a break, maybe 10 minutes or so. And from the break, we're going to be moving into small group conversation.

If you haven't done it already, would you see that the handout gets distributed around the table, with the resources and suggestions for parishes as well as individuals in responding to mental illness? We are not going to be talking about that specifically. So if during this next period of time, you could just at least glance through it and know what's there, that relieves us of the burden of having to present it and taking the time to present all of it. Pretty basic stuff.

When you get back in your groups, I'm going to give you about three different ways you could go at this. In a minute, I'm going to be inviting three volunteers to join us, and we'll explain your role here as we break. We're going to be having a panel discussion, or a panel of three other folks and Barb and me for the sharing that comes after your small group work. And at that point, we're going to be just opening the floor, but we're going to try to do it in a somewhat controlled way.

The first thing, the first option, is there may be something—we haven't given you a chance to react to our story—there may be something that you want Barb to expand on or something that I said, and you would like to raise a question or something about that, or an observation. That's one of the things that you can do during that time.

The second thing is you may see on the handout something that you want to bring up for the group in terms of pastoral care and how we respond to this in community settings, presumably communities of faith.

And then finally, our personal preference—and we can do probably all three of these things because we're going to have enough time to do it—is to share stories about, if you will, best

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practices, to use the jargon of the day, and positive things that your parish has offered or that you personally have offered in a response to mental illness in your community.

We could spend a lot of time talking about all the things we don't do, don't do at all or don't do well. I'm a fan of appreciative inquiry, if you're familiar with that model of organizational change. Telling stories of failure generally don't help a whole lot. We just wallow in the failure. So what we'd like to hear is stories about what has worked, of positive experiences that you've had in dealing with mental illness, and share those stories with one another.

Now, the way we're going to do that is there will be a microphone available for people from the tables. And this may be a little rude, but I'm going to be kind of a stickler to this. When we share a response to one particular idea or question or observation, we're not going to open the floor for people to react to that. If we do that, we could end up spending all of our time on just one or two questions. We want to get as much as we can. So we'll offer a chance to respond by any of the panelists, and then we'll move on to the next question.

We're going to have a good period of time. We're going to have probably 45 minutes or so for that, which is wonderful. And then Barb and I will just have a couple closing thoughts at that point. Does it make sense? Okay.

So start with a break. Volunteers: I need three people. Again, you don't have to be professionals, but if you are professionals in mental illness—you don't have to be, but if you are, that's great. But we're looking for people who've had practical experience dealing with the intersection between spirituality and mental illness. Could I have a raise of hands? Any of you be willing to join us as part of that? I got one here – Tom, thank you. And thank you. There's our three. If you would just come up here as soon as we break, and we can tell you how we're going to do that.

Take at least a 10-minute break. Move back to your tables. Start the conversation. I'll be reminding you occasionally of how much time you have left. Thank you very much.