St. Dymphna, patron saint of mental illness, watches over us

by Scott in Ohio

"Does he love us? Does he love us? Does he love us? I look around & all I see is destruction. I guess we're all counting on his Divine Intervention." These are lyrics from a Matthew Sweet song on the Girlfriend CD. I bought it in Feb, 1993, in the depths of depression, This CD has always had great meaning for me, especially the first song, Divine Intervention. Listening to it, projecting into it, I wondered if there was a way to get weight off my body, the invisible kick out of my stomach and let me see the world in focus - not distortion – again. I was 32 years old, but felt like 180. It doesn't matter how old you are. This song summed up my ups and downs as they occurred during the day.

I knew being in a waitress job, living in a crummy dark apartment, a marriage challenged by our lifestyle had nothing to do with the ups and downs that happened with no circumstantial control. I found this song to perfectly illustrate what bipolar disorder truly feels like without the technical words to describe it. But, "we're all counting on his Divine Intervention" was the best and most accurate rationalization of this bizarre problem. One day my life is filled with joy then I find we disagree. The disorder seemed based on divine intervention. How can you be so miserable and depressed on and on for several days, and then your mood swings up, and every thing must get cleaned, finished, started, here, now, right now? Everything must change because your mood has changed. You have to rearrange the pattern in your head. You go downtown to the city and wander all over without being able to focus on what store you want to go into. I used to call this the Loop Daze. Wandering from Lake St. to Harrison St. (a mile and a half), with nothing accomplished. Then, suddenly, without warning, like a spell broke, you feel sick, bad luck is hanging around, and every hour you're pissed off about something - not just depressed, but in a bad mood. So bad, I once threw something at my favorite cat, Mr. Tup, who was the sweetest creature. I don't even know what he did, meowed? That's when I knew I had to look for help. But where? You sit and wonder if the devil and God are playing with your mind. What is going on with you? Will drinking, drugs and crying help? This went on for years, even though I was able to go back to school.

One day, I was looking through my late mother's religious metals and found one of a saint I never heard of: St. Dymphna. I looked her up in a saint book, and found out she was the patron saint of mental illnesses. My sister suffered from schizophrenia. I knew my mother prayed to the patron saint of mental illnesses just to give her hope my sister might be normal one day. I started to pray to St. Dymphna, and while I might not believe in these things - nothing else had helped - she seemed to give me hope, open up a little window. Nevertheless, the ups and downs kept going on until I found the help I really needed. It took many years, but the prayers paid off. It was worth the wait. Nobody was taking bipolar disorder seriously. I didn't even know I had it.

"When he comes the sun shines. When he comes the sun shines sunshine, the sunshine . . . . here it comes . . "