

**Case Study:
"Mary, a Young Mother Recently Diagnosed with Breast Cancer"**

At age 29 Mary discovered a lump in her left breast. She successfully hid her worry from her husband of 8 years and went to see her doctor. Her doctor ordered a mammogram. The result was not conclusive. At her doctor's recommendation, Mary went to an oncologist surgeon for further evaluation. Finally, a biopsy was scheduled and completed. Mary scheduled an appointment to return so as to review the results with the surgeon. That night after she put their kids, two boys, age 5 and 8, to bed, Mary shared the news with her husband. Still hoping that this would somehow all just go away she spoke briefly and in a matter of fact manner. She looked at her husband and realized he didn't know what to say. At the follow up appointment Mary and her husband together met with the surgeon who gave them the results of the biopsy: the lump was a tumor, it was malignant and about three centimeters. Mary was numb. She could not believe what she heard; she was so sure that she was too young for this. In a flash she found herself thinking she couldn't have cancer – she had only been married 8 years, she and her husband had two young boys, and with the boys in school she had returned to her hobby of writing. Mary's surgeon reviewed all the options with her. She only heard a portion of what was said – words were swimming in her head: treatment, mastectomy, chemotherapy, cancer, and survival rate. Two things she knew for sure at that moment – that she felt very alone and that she would never be the same person again.

She and her husband approached her physician, counselor, and priest.

For the respondents:

Adopting the OCAMPR model of integrating body – mind – spirit, how would you respond to Mary from your perspective as physician, counselor, or priest?

Additional issues for discussion:

1. Medical
 - a. What are the treatment alternatives?
 - b. What are the benefits/risks/effects?
2. Psychological
 - a. What are the psychological issues?
 - b. What are the counseling/support alternatives?
3. Theological
 - a. What theological issues are raised concerning breast cancer and Mary?
 - b. What theological issues are raised concerning breast cancer and society?