

Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse

Resources for Mass

Introduction

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (PCPM) has highlighted the importance of prayer and suggested to Pope Francis that the worldwide Catholic Church should join together in a day of prayer. The Holy Father has welcomed this initiative.

In the Cycle of Prayer for England and Wales, this day is marked every year on the Friday of the fifth week of Lent.

On Friday 12 April the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales is encouraging the Catholic community to take part in a day of prayer for survivors of sexual abuse.

Mass

The following material could be used at Weekday Mass on Friday 16 April (Friday, 5th Week of Lent). In addition to this Priests may consider using one of the two Eucharistic Prayers of Reconciliation. Additional, expanded intercessions can be downloaded from the *Resources | Intercessory Prayer*

Introduction

The following or similar words may be used.

Welcome. We are here to join our prayers with all the faithful in the Catholic Church in England & Wales today, on this National Day of Prayer for people in our families and communities who carry within themselves the deep and traumatic wounds inflicted by sexual abuse. What has emerged about the abuse of children and vulnerable people in our Church, and the subsequent cover ups is horrifying. It is especially shocking when this abuse has been perpetrated by a member of the clergy, who by his very office is a trusted representative of Christ and his Church. The presence of every person here is important. You may have personal experience of abuse, or be close to someone who has. We are here to support you and pray with you and for you.

Penitential Act

Lord Jesus, you stand alongside all who are suffering.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you listen to those who cry out to you.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of betrayal and hurt.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Liturgy of the Word

Reading

Jeremiah 20:10–13

The Lord is at my side, a mighty hero.

Psalm

Ps 17: 2–7. R. cf. v. 7

In my anguish I called to the Lord and he heard my voice.

Gospel

John 10:31–42

They wanted to arrest Jesus the, but he eluded them.

Homily Notes

- Jeremiah: For those who have survived abuse the search for justice can be long and difficult. It can involve the disbelief of and harming of the relationship with family and friends.
- Psalm: The effects of abuse can be overwhelming and life-threatening. We believe that God does respond to the cries of those who seek help, but this can require the participation of us to be a place of safety.
- Gospel: A common theme of the gospels is the integral link between words and deeds. What Jesus does and what he says. The Church has to continually learn this lesson and to seek repentance when there is a disconnect between words and action.

Scripture Reflection

Jeremiah 20:10-13 — The ‘terror’ felt by victims, often experienced as post-traumatic stress years on from the events, buried, until it has felt safe enough to reveal. As helpless victims, children and vulnerable people, they were violated, neglected, abused, physical, emotionally, sexually, spiritually. For many the pain and impact of this abuse was so profound that it shattered every ounce of their identity. We commit their cause, as our cause, to the Lord, and ask the Lord to deliver these precious souls from their anguish.

Gospel: John 10:31-42 — They fetched stones to stone Jesus. ‘We are stoning you for blasphemy – you are only a man and you claim to be God. And Jesus replies ‘You say to this to someone the Father has consecrated and sent into the world?’ Each one of us here is consecrated to God, given the dignity of a child of God, precious in God’s sight. And yet, the victims of abuse, our brothers and sisters who are part of us, holy and precious to God – have had their innate dignity and identity utterly violated, and at worst this violence has been perpetrated by those responsible for their well-being, those seen as men of God, acting in ways diametrically opposed to the teaching and Gospel they proclaim, with tragic consequences. If one member suffers we all suffer together (1 Cor 12.26) We are here to confront the evil of abuse openly and the suffering it causes, and to pray together for victims and their families, that they find a road that leads to the source of new hope and life. And we hope, through this lens, that we too will come to understand in a new way the meaning of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Prayer of the Faithful

These bidding prayers can be used during Mass on Friday and also weekend Masses:

For those whose lives are affected by the enduring and painful memory of sexual abuse and physical violence; may their families, friends and supporters renew their trust and security in loving relationships. May all members of the Church be instruments of healing.
Lord, in your mercy...

For leaders of the Church; may they lead with humility and mercy and seek to protect the vulnerable and the least.
Lord, in your mercy...