

PRAYER SERVICE FOR VICTIMS OF CLERGY SEXUAL ASSAULT

Opening Hymn: #410, Wait for the Lord (*Taize*)

Collect: O God, author of true freedom, whose will it is to shape all women and men into a single people released from slavery, grant to your Church, we pray, that, as she receives new growth in freedom, she may appear more clearly to the world as the universal sacrament of salvation, manifesting and making present the mystery of your love for all. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. [Roman Missal, *Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions*, Mass for Reconciliation]

Scripture Reading: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew. “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of things that cause sin! Such things must come, but woe to the one through whom they come! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life maimed or crippled than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into fiery Gehenna. “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.” The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection/Homilette

Hymn: #538, Veni Sancte Spiritus (*Taize*)

Candle Lighting Ceremony: Instrumental

[The presider invites all those present who knew someone, either a family member or friend, who has been victimized by clergy sexual assault or otherwise to come forward. When these persons come forward they are handed a lighted tea-light candle, and then they are invited to place their individual candle down in front of a statue of the child Jesus. Once they have placed their candles at the feet of the child Jesus, these persons can return to their seats. The lighting in the church should be dimmed during this ceremony. After all of the candles have been placed on the devotional table dedicated to the child Jesus, then the congregation is asked to sing together a reflective hymn.]

Hymn: #484, Stay with Me (*Taize*)

Psalm of Lament: Psalm 51 *[All are invited to kneel during the recitation of this Psalm]*

General Intercessions [usccb.org, *Rosary for Healing and Protection*, the Sorrowful Mysteries]

Our Response is: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

- Many survivors of sexual abuse suffer in silence for years, wrestling alone with the agony of their memories and pain. We pray that the Church may always be a place where they can

come to share their stories, be received in love and compassion, and be supported on the path to healing. We pray to the Lord.

- The experience of sexual abuse may leave scars no less profound than the scars of a scourging, though they often remain unseen. We must strive to make our parish communities places where survivors can feel safe to share their burdens and to find healing and peace. We pray to the Lord.
- Those who have survived sexual abuse may feel isolated from the community, set apart and unwelcome. Jesus must have felt the same as the soldiers mocked and tortured him. As members of Christ's Body, the Church, we are called to see Christ in our brothers and sisters in need and offer them our aid, comfort, and support. We pray to the Lord.
- Simon helped Jesus carry his cross, helping him bear the weight and the burden. So must we help survivors of sexual abuse bear the weight and burden of their experiences, helping them to find healing God who is light and life. We pray to the Lord.
- We commend into God's hands all those who are at risk for sexual abuse, those who are doing the hard work of healing, and those who are not yet ready to begin the healing process. Through our prayers, efforts, and sacrifices, may they come to know the peace and wholeness that only God can bring. We pray to the Lord.

Presider: At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching we dare to say,
Our Father...

Closing Prayer:

God of endless love
ever caring, ever strong
always present, always just;
You gave your only Son to save us by his Blood on the
Cross.
Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.
Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters
who have been gravely harmed,
and the cries of those who love them.
Soothe their restless hearts with hope,
steady their shaken spirits with faith.
Grant them justice for their cause,
enlightened by your truth.
Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness into wholeness.
Grant us the courage and wisdom,

humility and grace, to act with justice.

Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors.

Grant that all harmed by abuse find peace in justice.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen. [usccb.org, *Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse*]

Presider: The Lord be with you.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge of love of God, and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Closing Hymn: #783, Here I am, Lord (*Taize*)

PRAYER FOR HEALING VICTIMS OF ABUSE

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
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Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters
who have been gravely harmed,
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Grant us the courage and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors.
Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Novena for the Abuse Crisis

Day 1

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Father in Heaven, have mercy on us and on the whole world. Holy Spirit, comfort us, give us clarity, and bring light to this darkness and evil.

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Saint Peter, pray for the Church, that it may be re-built, healed, and made holy.

St. Charles Lwanga and St. Monica, pray for the abused, the survivors and for justice.

St. Catherine of Siena, pray for reform and restoration of the clergy.

St. John Vianney, pray for the holiness of priests and bishops.

St. Benedict, pray that this evil be cast out of the Church.

St. Anthony, pray for us to find the way forward.

St. Paul, pray for the bishops that they may be fearless in confronting other bishops.

St. Augustine, pray for true repentance and transparency.

St. Dymphna, pray for consolation for the heartache, depression and anxiety this evil has caused.

Our Lady of Sorrows, pray for us!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Day 2

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A Rosary for Healing and Protection

The Glorious Mysteries

The Resurrection “Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised.” (Lk 24:5-6) The Father’s gift of healing is a wondrous thing, bringing new life and hope from what was pain and despair. We pray for all victims of child sexual abuse, that they may come to abundant new life in the Risen Lord.

The Ascension into Heaven As [the apostles] were looking on, [Jesus] was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. (Acts 1:9) Jesus ascended into heaven in the presence of his Apostles, making them his witnesses to the whole world. We too are called to be witnesses, speaking on behalf of vulnerable children and young people and helping to build a society where they are safe from those who would steal their trust and their innocence.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit They were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. (Acts 2:4) The Spirit brought the Apostles the gift of courage. No longer did they hide behind locked doors in the upper room, seeking their own safety. Rather, they boldly went out into the city proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and calling the people to repentance in his name. In the same way, we must boldly speak out to protect children and to create environments where they can grow and learn in safety.

The Assumption The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God. (Rv 12:6) At her death, Mary was assumed into heaven, body and soul. As she carried the Son of God in her body, her body was taken to heaven to share in the full glory of her Son. We pray for those victims of child sexual abuse who seek healing and wholeness, that Mary will present them to her Son who alone makes us whole.

The Crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven I will make your name renowned through all generations; thus nations shall praise you forever. (Ps 45:18) As the Mother of our Redeemer, Mary was crowned as Queen of Heaven. From heaven, she intercedes for us as a loving mother. We entrust into her maternal care all vulnerable children and young people, praying that she will intercede on their behalf and keep them safe from all harm.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

Agony in the Garden He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. (Lk 22:44) Many victims of child sexual abuse suffer in silence for years, wrestling alone with the agony of their memories and pain. We pray that the Church may always be a place where they can come to share their stories, be received in love and compassion, and be supported on the path to healing.

Scourging at the Pillar Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. (Jn 19:1) The experience of child sexual abuse may leave scars no less profound than the scars of a scourging, though they often remain unseen. We must strive to make our parish communities places where victims can feel safe to share their burdens and to find healing and peace.

Crowning with Thorns And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck him repeatedly. (Jn 19:2-3) Those who have survived sexual abuse may feel isolated from the community, set apart and unwelcome. Jesus must have felt the same as the soldiers mocked and tortured him. As members of Christ’s Body, the Church, we are called to see Christ in our brothers and sisters in need and offer them our aid, comfort, and support environments where they can grow and learn in safety.

Carrying the Cross They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. (Mk 15:21) Simon helped Jesus carry his cross, helping him bear the weight and the burden. So must we help victims of child sexual abuse bear the weight and burden of their experiences, helping them to find healing God who is light and life.

The Crucifixion Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit;” and when he had said this he breathed his last. (Lk 23:46) We commend into God’s hands all those who are at risk for child sexual abuse, those who are doing the hard work of healing, and those who are not yet ready to begin the healing process. Through our prayers, efforts, and sacrifices, may they come to know the peace and whole that only God can bring.

The Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation Then the angel said to [Mary], “Do not be afraid.” (Lk 1:30) The angel Gabriel greeted Mary with words to calm her fears. God wants everyone, especially the most vulnerable, to live in his peace, free from all fear and pain. It is our responsibility, as children of our loving God, to create an environment in which our children can grow up free from fear of those who might hurt or abuse them.

The Visitation “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” (Lk 1:46) After receiving the news that she would become the mother of God’s Son, Mary’s first action was one of compassion. She went to her kinswoman, Elizabeth, and offered aid and comfort. Following her example, we must reach out to those around us in need of hope and healing, offering our assistance and patience as they embrace God’s healing love.

The Nativity She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Lk 2:7) Jesus, the Son of God, entered the world as a vulnerable child. He was not counted among the great and powerful, instead lying in a manger. We are called to protect all those who are vulnerable, especially children, by providing them with safe places to live and grow.

The Presentation “You yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” (Lk 2:35) The experience of child sexual abuse is shattering and can make a person feel as if his or her heart and world is torn asunder. We pray for those victims who are seeking healing and strength. Their path is challenging, but our loving support can make it easier.

Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple His mother said to him, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” (Lk 2:48) Child sexual abuse affects not only the victim, but his or her family as well. Our healing efforts must extend to these family members, to alleviate their pain and anxiety and help them to grow ever closer to God’s healing love.

The Luminous Mysteries

The Baptism of Jesus A voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Mt 3:17) Every child is beloved by God, precious in his sight. There is no room in the Church for those who would harm children, betraying their trust and destroying their innocence. All members of the Church must do their part to make the Church and society safe for children.

Wedding at Cana Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn 2:4-5) A guest at a wedding in Cana, Jesus’ mother stepped in to assist the couple in their time of need. We must follow her example by taking active steps to come to the aid of children who are at risk of abuse, to be vigilant in protecting them, and to advocate on behalf of those who become victims.

Preaching of the Kingdom of God “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mk 1:15) Jesus boldly preached the coming of God’s kingdom, reminding his hearers of the need to conform their lives to God’s laws. As members of God’s Church, we must boldly remind all elements of society of the need to protect children and young people.

The Transfiguration [Jesus] was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. (Mt 17:2) In his Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John saw Jesus as he truly is in all his divine glory. So must we see victims of sexual abuse as they are – the precious children of God, worthy of dignity and respect. We must do all that we can to aid in their healing and to assure them of the love of God and his people.

Institution of the Eucharist “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me.” ...”This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.” (Lk 22:19-20) In the gift of the Eucharist, Jesus makes present his sacrifice of redeeming love. This sacrifice makes us whole as one Body of Christ. We pray that Jesus may heal all that wounds of his Body, most especially the wounds caused by the sexual abuse of children and young people.

Prayer for Abuse Victims God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong, always present, always just; You gave your only Son to save us by his Blood on the Cross. Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace, join to your own suffering the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind, and spirit by those who betrayed the trust placed in them. Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters who have been gravely harmed, and the cries of the families and friends who love them. Soothe their restless hearts with hope, steady their shaken spirits with faith. Grant them justice for their cause, enlightened by your truth. Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts, heal your people’s wounds and transform brokenness into wholeness. Grant us the courage and wisdom, humility and grace, to act with justice. Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors. Grant that all harmed by abuse might find peace in justice. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

The Contemporary Laments

Lament 1:

"I cry aloud to God, that God may hear me."

God of all the ages,
this is not an easy time to be Catholic.
We feel concern, anger, disgust, confusion, disappointment,
sadness, embarrassment, and great anguish.
We grieve that the Church no longer feels like your refuge,
your house in this world and in heaven consecrated to be holy.
Some of our friends and family who are not Catholic
ask why we remain.
But we do remain because of our trust in you.
Lord God, give us strength and courage
to continue living and spreading the gospel of your Son at this difficult time.

Lament 2:

"I pondered, and my spirit questioned."

A parent's greatest desire is to have their children know
they are loved forever by you, my God;
To know your Son Jesus Christ and follow him as a disciple;
and to be part of the beautiful community of the Spirit
that I know as the Catholic Church.
But when some pastors and shepherds violate trust in such an egregious way,
children are harmed not only in their bodies but also in their faith in You.
There are truly no words for my anger.
I feel deep compassion for victims and survivors of abuse, wherever it took place.
Some of them have been victimized twice:
first, by their abusers,
and then by efforts to silence them and cover up the darkness.
How could some in positions of power simply look the other way
or move abusers around, and not protect the vulnerable?
Light the way with your wisdom, my God.

Lament 3:

"Will the Lord reject us forever?"

We dread that what we have heard is not the end,
That more is yet to be revealed.
But we cannot be light in this world if we harbor hidden darkness.
God of truth, let the truth emerge,
that we may tend to the wounds and let your healing begin.
May there be repentance on the part of those who have sinned,
healing for victims and their families,
and your grace working mightily in the Church
to protect and care for the young, the vulnerable, and the marginalized.
Let there be an end to clericalism and any system that reinforces the abuse of power.
Let us all have a role in your grace of healing.
Let the voices of laywomen and laymen
be heard at every level of Church leadership.

Lament 4:

"I remember your wonders of old."

The image I hold onto in prayer is Jesus clearing the temple.

He makes a whip out of cords; he scatters coins and overturns tables.

"Get these out of here!" he cries.

Lord, you washed temples clean, you purified hearts,
you set people back on the right path.

The psalmist said: "Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure;
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

As I remember your wonders of old,

I also remember Jesus washing the feet of the apostles,
teaching them to do the same for others.

Show us how to protect the vulnerable
and to ensure that no abuser is protected, no victim ignored.

Purify your Church, and purify each of us,
that we may walk in your ways full of hope and trust in you.

God of pure love,
we look to you to cleanse and restore all that has been lost.

Lament 5:

"Your ways, O God, are holy."

God of love,

it is my faith in you that sustains me.

I pray for peace and healing for all the victims;

I pray that they will continue to know and believe in you,
our loving and merciful God.

I want children to have a future in your Church.

I want the Church to be a source of comfort and inspiration,

a place to grow their relationship with God

a place where they can serve others.

I want them to find strength, comfort, and connection through the sacraments.

that the Eucharist will give them clarity in a shattered world.

I am so grateful each Sunday

to look around me and see my brothers and sisters lined up beside me.

It is absolute beauty.

I teach children that this is their Church, as much as it is anyone else's,

that they belong here and no one can take that away from them.

That is why we continue to show up,

knowing that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves,
bigger than any given moment in history.

Lament 6:

"You guided your people like a flock."

This is a dark and confusing time in your Church, Lord,

In the end, two things will get us through this:

turning to Christ for healing, solace, and comfort;

and taking action to correct the broken systems that have led to this crisis.

I pray that the grace in the Eucharist will heal us,

that it will connect our Church and make us stronger.

I pray that from this suffering and anguish

a more authentic Church will rise.

I pray that the Church, all of us, will realize that this IS our moment.

If we can find a way to reveal, heal, and move forward with justice and mercy,
the Church can be a model of light for our broken world.