

The Bishops' Conference of Scotland
DAY OF PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED ABUSE
Friday 16 February 2024

The Bishops of Scotland have established a Day of Prayer for those who have suffered abuse to be marked each year on the Friday after Ash Wednesday.

The following material has been prepared with the generous support of some survivors of abuse.

The material is offered for use either during Mass or on its own.

At Mass, the use of the Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation is appropriate.

An Act of Atonement is anticipated towards the end of the Prayer of the Faithful. For this Act, a place, either close to the altar or in another place of devotional prayer, is to be prepared with a candle for each member of the congregation to light and the means to light them. The Prayer of the Faithful is concluded with a Prayer for Survivors, spoken by all. Copies of the Prayer for Survivors should be distributed in advance.

Where possible, an image of the lit candles and the text of the Prayer for Survivors may be placed on websites/social media channels etc., so that those affected who are unable to come into the church can still see it. A jpg image of the prayer is provided for this purpose. The liturgy may also be livestreamed.

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Bind us together
O the word of my Lord

READINGS

From the Mass of Friday after Ash Wednesday.

SUGGESTED HOMILY NOTES

Today, the first Friday in Lent, is dedicated here in the Catholic Church in Scotland to remembering and praying for survivors of abuse. We don't always know who they are when we gather as a community to pray. Many no longer feel able to come into Church with us, and their loss is sorely felt. Abuse suffered at the hands of priests and religious was a betrayal of the sanctuary that the Church should be, and the effects of it continue to ripple through our communities.

Our Church should be a place of sanctuary. Our Church is learning how to be a listening Church. Can we describe Safeguarding as a new charism? What of the future? To where is God calling us now? Even in the darkness, God has been gifting a charism to the Church. He is teaching us to listen, to accompany, and to be instruments of healing – yes, to those who have suffered abuse within the Church, as well as those who have suffered abuse in families or other places. By and large, today we find it difficult to listen, to take the time to listen. Today, this is one great area into which the Lord is leading the Church. People who are unheard and often invisible are among the very people to whom the Church is called to minister. The Lenten fast, the ongoing Christian sacrifice, which is pleasing to the Lord is, as the prophet Isaiah says, to let the oppressed go free, to lift burdens, to share bread with the hungry, to shelter the homeless poor. We cannot love God without loving our neighbour.

Accompanying survivors is, without any doubt, a challenging ministry, but it is, at the same time, a beautiful vocation, a contemporary vocation towards which the Church calls people forth. We become instruments of healing by seeking justice, but also, increasingly, by listening and accompanying. We must continue to walk forward together as a Church to grow in our profound spiritual conversion regarding safeguarding, because it is the Lord who is calling us, and this mission is essential in our time.

Today, to survivors of abuse, not only within the church but to all those whom we meet in our daily lives and are unaware they have suffered abuse in its many forms – domestic abuse, online abuse, familial abuse and more – we say we are so, so sorry. It is not your fault. It was never your fault.

You, the parishioners of St N. parish, will soon be invited to come forward towards the end of the Prayer of the Faithful to light a candle in atonement, yes, but more importantly in at-1-ment with victims and survivors of any kind of abuse. Those who are not present with us remain close to us in our thoughts and prayers.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

An Act of Atonement is anticipated towards the end of the Prayer of the Faithful. For this Act, a place, either close to the altar or in another place of devotional prayer, is to be prepared with a candle for each member of the congregation to light and the means to light them. The Prayer of the Faithful is concluded with a Prayer for Survivors, spoken by all. Copies of the Prayer for Survivors should be distributed in advance.

Presider:

Almighty and most loving God, through your Son you brought compassion, healing and hope to our world. In this time of pain and confusion, we ask you to receive these prayers from your people.

Reader:

For the little ones of our community who have suffered abuse, whether sexual, physical or emotional, that they understand it is not their fault. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who minister to people who have suffered abuse, that they receive the gifts of wisdom and compassion, enabling them to really help. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For our own community, that we may have the courage to listen and to receive those who are wounded into our midst. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those whose faith has been shaken by betrayal, that their hope and trust are restored. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Presider:

You, the parishioners of St N. parish, are now invited to come forward to light a candle in atonement, yes, but more importantly in at-1-ment with victims and survivors of any kind of abuse. Those who are not present with us remain close to us in our thoughts and prayers.

The celebrant should light the first candle. Members of the congregation then move forward to light a candle in atonement with victims and survivors of any kind of abuse. When the candles are lit and the people have returned to their place, the Prayer of the Faithful is concluded by the celebrant inviting the people to pray together this Prayer for Survivors:

Heal their wounds, their strength renew

A Prayer for Survivors

Bestow healing, Lord God,
upon your beloved children,
wounded by the pain and fear
inflicted on them by others.

Cast light on the darkness of their hearts
and draw near to them
to restore what is lost.

Shelter them safely in your love
and make them confident in the knowledge
that they have been powerfully redeemed.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Prepared by the Scottish National Liturgical Commission
and the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency with generous support of some survivors of abuse.
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