

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS:
Supporting Victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse in the Church

Co- presiders:

Lay Women:
Lay Man
Religious:
Priest:

Introduction:

This prayer vigil represents an Archdiocesan initiative to begin to acknowledge the sorrow and pain victims of clergy sexual abuse have endured at the hands of all facets of the Catholic Church including the bishops, priests and laypeople. This is an opportunity to pause and take time to acknowledge how we as a church must change and begin to become a welcoming community for victims of clergy sexual abuse. We need to support victims, learn from them and develop resources for healing. We come together this evening in prayer, to sit in silence and to listen, to hear Scripture, to sing, to make petition, to seek light in the darkness of sexual abuse in the Church and to express our faith and hope that things can be different. This will be an annual event in the Archdiocese that will eventually be held in each deanery every year in order to ask God to lead us toward becoming a different kind of church, a profoundly welcoming church, a church that acknowledges its failings and expresses its desire to be converted. We are grateful for the presence of each one here. Thank you for coming. We invite everyone to be here in whatever way you feel comfortable. Some of us may find active participation impossible. Others may be here simply to watch and to listen. Some may be unable to pray or to sing. We want you to know that we honour the presence of each person here. We recognize those who are not able to be here for various reasons, including the depth of their pain, or those that are no longer with us; and we remember them in a special way. We acknowledge as well the presence of resource people from various agencies who have made themselves available this evening to provide support for anyone who may wish to talk to someone after the service for whatever reason. We will introduce them at the close of our prayer service.

Silence

Poem : A Cry in the Darkness

Light shining on cross (black cloth laid at foot of the cross)

Silence

Opening Song: Seeking Light

Lighting of the Candles:

Clergy sexual abuse of power remains a great darkness in the Church today. We sit together in this darkness tonight, together with those who have been abused, those who are able to be with us and those who are not, acknowledging their pain and our part in it, especially our inability and /or our refusal to respond in a healing ways. We have not been and are still not what God is calling us to be for them, a healing community. The candles in the shape of a cross represent the unknown victim. The candles in a circle around the cross is the light of Christ to come dispel our darkness. We now invite those, who wish, to receive the light of Christ that comes to you from the Christ candle.

Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you promised through your passion that we would experience hope, faith, light and resurrection. We hold you to this promise as we stand at the foot of your cross aware of the brokenness and injustice. May you guide many in ways that lead to transformation. You shone a light on a dark world come to us tonight and fill the darkness with light, so that people may see the pain and tragedy that abuse has caused. Allow all those among us to open their hearts, seek the truth, open their minds, giving us courage and humility to walk with all those who are wounded to seek your justice so the truth may be spoken. All of this we ask in the name of our crucified and risen brother.

You can now extinguish your candles.

Matthew 26: 36-46

(Then) Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.' And going a little further, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.' Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' Again he came and found them sleeping for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the

hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

Jesus went with them to a place call Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'

Night is upon us and we come out to Gethsemane to pray. We will continue to pray until the light begins to dawn. Jesus is here with us. He prays with us. He prays for us, when we can no longer pray. We do not know how to pray. We do not know what to pray for. Here Jesus prays for us, on our behalf. His Spirit prays within us, with words we cannot express, words beyond our understanding. As we cry out, as we groan in this great time of suffering and confusion for our victims, he turns our cry, our groaning, our suffering, into a powerful prayer for light, for healing.

Silence (Black Cloth that was place at bottom of the cross will be placed on the cross)

Jesus prayed. When people wanted to make Jesus king, to hand over their power to him, he slipped away and prayed. When Satan promised him power over all the kingdoms of the world, he sent him away and stayed in the desert, again, to pray. But we have given power to those who have abused it. We often ourselves use our power to have our own way, to do our own will rather than God's will, to hurt rather than help. We stand by while our brothers and sisters are victimized and re-victimized. Secretly, and sometimes not so secretly, we have wanted them to go away so that we do not have to face the truth of the abuse of the power Christ has shared with us. Pray in us, Jesus. Pray with us. Pray for us when we cannot pray for ourselves. Bring light to our darkness. Help us to remain here with you and with our victims in prayer until the first rays of dawn.

Silence

Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.'

Jesus invites us now to come to him, to stay with him. That is the call given to us at the moment our baptism, when Jesus clothed us with his own dignity, his own glory. He came down among us as one like us, so that we might become like him. We share the power he has given us with those to whom he sends us. The white robe of his glory is the sign of our dignity as members of his body. When the clergy don the alb, they proclaim that they are first of all one of us. One of the baptized, equal in dignity, equal in power. We come here to take the lowest place as Jesus himself did, that he might raise us up as friends.

Silence (White cloth placed on cross)

We ask God's transforming mercy, the gift of true conversion and contrition, the path to the healing of our own great sinfulness. We come to this place, this lowly

place, where we can be brothers and sisters with all those whom we have harmed and who seek a healing community.

We stand with Christ with our victims. We are one with them. They are one with us. We come to our victims to find the honesty and humility we need to repent and be converted, to believe the good news, that all might attain healing, that all might attain salvation. We acknowledge our abuses of power, our failure to intervene to protect them, the way we have blamed them for the darkness that has descended upon us, the way we have continually re-victimized them by not knowing how to respond and not standing by them when they have sought healing. Few have walked with victims and learned forgiveness is necessary, but most have not because they are not aware the responsibility that they bear.

Silence

Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, 'So could you not stay awake with me one hour?'

Where are his disciples today? Where are these crowds of people who come to hear Jesus and to be healed? Perhaps they linger on the fringes of the Church, silent, watching, and waiting. Waiting for a word of healing. Waiting for the light to dawn upon us. Would that this light begin to dawn, the first streaks of light in our darkness, the promise of his coming "with healing in his wings." The light beginning ever so faintly to appear. Christ the healer, beginning to break through the darkness of our sin, our blindness, our deafness, our hardness of heart, our paralysis. The light that will turn us into healers rather than abusers and bystanders. It begins when we wake up, when we begin to listen, to hear, and to understand, to look and to see, and to act.

Silence (purple cloth place on cross)

Jesus, brother, heal our blindness, our deafness, the hardness of our hearts, our paralysis, that all those who are not seen or heard may find a home with you, with us.

Silence

Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going.'

The arrest of Jesus begins the final journey of the healing ministry of Jesus. Jesus healing is exercised through the gift of himself, his love, his service to all of us, each and every one of us. So different from the *perversion* of power, used to dominate, to create unhealthy dependencies, to abuse, to exploit, to treat others as "less than," as dangerous, as troublemakers, as things to be used and then thrown away, discarded, marginalized. The healing power Jesus gives is power to repent, to see, to hear, to live differently, to serve, to include, to help, to liberate, to walk in the shoes of one another, in the shoes of Jesus, to

accompany our victims as they seek healing of a suffering they may always carry with them. It is power to know and be known, to accept and be accepted, to understand and be understood. It is power to die together to all that is not of God, to die to all abuse of power, in order that God might raise us up to a new and healing way of being together, filled with respect and trust, care and compassion, justice, love, and peace.

Silence. (Crown of thorns placed on cross)

Meditation Song: (Let the Healing Begin)

Prayers of the Faithful :

After each petition let us respond with Come Holy Spirit Come

- For all victims of clergy sexual abuse, no matter where or when the offense took place, their families and communities. We pray

Response: **Come Holy Spirit Come**

- That the Holy Spirit may guide our church officials in their response to this crisis. We pray.

Response: **Come Holy Spirit Come**

- That Jesus may touch the hearts of the faithful to recognize the pain of victims and respond to the crisis in a positive way. We pray.

Response: **Come Holy Spirit Come**

- That those who have experienced the loss of their spirit, hope and soul, and who have been abandoned and tossed aside be welcomed with open arms by our loving mother Mary and by Christ's loving embrace. We pray.

Response: **Come Holy Spirit Come**

- That the church's promise bring justice and transformation, including that we may heal within ourselves. We pray.

Response: **Come Holy Spirit Come**

- For those victims who are no longer with us that God holds them so they no longer feel the pain and torment. We pray.

Response: **Come Holy Spirit Come**

Closing Prayer:

O God, we believe you created us in your image and likeness, and that you walk with us today and always. You call us to show mercy, just as you show mercy to us. You hold those who suffer with special care, and your heart is fully open in love towards the victims of clergy sexual abuse. You are with them, and they are not alone. In turn you call us to walk with them and show them compassion, so that they never have to be alone again.

Lord God, you call us to a deep honesty before you and before each other. You know the truth of what we have done, including our great failings towards those who are most vulnerable. Through the prophets, you remind us again and again that sin, deceit, the abuse and misuse of power, secrecy and all structures of oppression and domination of others, must stop. You call us to put an end to the persecution of the least among us, and instead to reach out to those who are suffering and to learn to listen, to start to learn what we can do so that others may begin to know healing.

O Lord, you know the suffering of your people gathered here. Where we are wounded, look down upon us in your great mercy. Where we have wounded others, teach us how to be instruments of the healing that you desire. Wounds often lead to others being excluded, pushed aside. You invite each of us to be with you in body and soul, including through the Eucharist, but you show us that many have been cast aside and no longer feel welcome at your table because of our misdeeds, their voices lost in the darkness. Show us your mercy so that your table may be restored to all, so that all might know that you, Lord Jesus, dwell in them. O God, wherever we are, help us to find a home in you.

Following the closing song we invite everyone to stay for a reception. If people would like to speak with a support person, identify the people.

Please join me in singing the closing song:

Closing song: God of Day God of Darkness