

Service to be used (final copy)
SEEKING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS:
Addressing the Issue of Sexual Abuse in the Church

Date:

Venue:

Co- presiders:

Lay Woman:

Lay Man

Religious

Priest

Introduction:

This prayer vigil represents the beginning of an Archdiocesan initiative directed toward those who wish to grow as a welcoming community for victims of clergy sexual abuse, for the purpose of support, learning, and the development of 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 only the first in a series of prayer services we will host to ask God to lead us toward becoming a healing community for victims of clergy abuse. We are grateful for the presence of each one here. We invite everyone to be here in whatever way you choose. Some of us may find active participation impossible. Some of us may be here simply to watch and to listen. Some may find themselves unable to pray or to sing. We want you to know that we honor the presence of each person here. We invite you to be here in whatever way you choose. We recognize those who are not able to be here for various reasons, including the depth of their pain and we remember them in a special way. We acknowledge as well the presence of resource people from Catholic Family Services 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

Silence

Opening Song: Seeking Light

Opening Prayer:

O Sophia, Holy Wisdom of God, you who were present at the creation of all the world, we call on you to be present with us this night. Fill the hearts of your faithful people gathered here, and the hearts of all people. Give us the courage of humility, the strength to speak the truth, and the wisdom to find your justice. All of this we ask in the name of our crucified and risen brother, Jesus.

Amen. (Adapted from Prayer for Wisdom and Justice by Call to Action)

Gospel: Luke 6: 12, 17-19

Jesus went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. (Then) Jesus came down with (his apostles) and stood on a level place, with a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. Those multitudes had come to hear him and to be healed; and those who were troubled were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

The gospel of the Lord.

Reflections on the Gospel (short reflections shared by the presiders)

Jesus went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer.

Silence (light easter candle)

Night is upon us and we come out to the mountain 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 (light 1st candle)

When people wanted to make Jesus king, to hand over their power to him, he slipped through the crowd and went to the mountain to pray. When Satan promised him 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 on this mountain in prayer until the first rays of dawn.

Silence (light 2nd candle)

Then Jesus came down with his apostles and stood on a level place.

Silence

Healed, Jesus came back to heal. He refused to accept power over others. He turned down the kingdoms of this world. He invites us now to come with him, to begin that journey down the mountain to our brothers and sisters who seek healing. We journey with him to a level place. That is the call given to us at the moment of 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 equality 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 (light 3rd candle)

We stand with Christ on this level ground 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. We do not yet ask their forgiveness because we have not yet earned that forgiveness. Instead, 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 level place, this lowly place, where we can be brothers and sisters with all those whom we have harmed and who seek a healing community.

Silence (light 4th candle)

A great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon came to hear him and be healed.

Where are these multitudes 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 bands of purple and rose, the colours of Advent, 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 begin to listen, to hear, and to

understand, to look and to see, to wake up and to act. 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 (light 5th candle)

And all in the crowd were trying to touch him for power came out of him and healed all of them

Silence

Power came out of him and healed all of them. *All* of them. Healing power flowing out to everyone who touched him. 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 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 (light 6th candle)

Prayers of the Faithful

(A candle will be brought forth to the center table after each prayer)

- We pray for the healing of survivors of clergy sexual abuse, their families and communities... (Response: Lord. May your light begin to dawn among us)
- We pray that the Holy Spirit may guide our Church officials in their response to this crisis...
- We pray that the community of faith, in the spirit of Jesus, may reach out with compassionate care to all victims of abuse and their families....
- We pray for repentance, forgiveness and healing for all who have abused others...
- We pray that those who have been wounded by this crisis may feel the loving embrace of Christ...
- We pray that the Spirit of God may continue to bring justice and transformation within our church.....

(adapted from “A Prayer Service for Healing in Response to the Clergy Sex Abuse Crisis” by Sr. Bridget Mary Meehan, sfcc)

Closing Prayer:

We believe, loving God, that you are creating us, walking with us, helping us to be *co-creators of a renewed church where all might flourish and thrive.*

We believe, loving God, that you are calling us to be compassion for our world, *our neighbours, the least among us, and at this time especially, the victims of clergy sexual abuse.*

We believe, loving God, that you know our suffering and call us to be one with each other.

We believe, loving God, that you are with us in history and call us to make real the words of the prophets: that we might heal the suffering caused by sin, secrecy, deceit, the misuse of power, and all structures of domination and oppression.

We believe, loving God, in you who became human and dwelt among us, who calls us to build a world of life and love and to find in that work the transcendence of divine joy.

We believe in the community of faith planted on this earth to carry out the witness of Jesus, to nurture one another on this journey with love and tenderness, to heal all who have been crucified among us, to make whole the Body of Christ.

We believe in a world and a church where there are no longer rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed, those with power and those without, those with a voice and those who are voiceless, but where all are welcome at the banquet table, sharing the one bread in the dignity and sacredness that God has bestowed on all creation through Jesus our crucified and risen brother. Amen.

(adapted from "Stations of the Cross: a prayer of solidarity with the victims of clergy sexual abuse." By Lori Lambert, Christine Pao, Aileen Ryder, Susan Rutkowski and Colleen Vogt of The Coalition of Concerned Catholics)

Closing Music

(and invitation to stay for refreshments and introduction of resource people and invitation to talk with them.)

