

Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse

16th February 2024

The proposal for a universal day of prayer was initially made in 2016 to the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (PCPM) by a survivor of clerical abuse. At the time a press release from the Commission stated, "In the experience of our members, victims/survivors have often expressed a desire for prayer as an important element in their healing process."

In response Pope Francis invited bishops around the world to establish a special day of prayer in the Church year to support the paths of human and spiritual recovery. This day is not only for victims and survivors, who have been so severely injured, either inside or outside the Church, but also for families and communities affected by grief for their loved ones.

All parishes and religious communities are invited to organise their own service or moment of prayer; encouraged to light again the Candle of Atonement, and include a prayer for victims.

Blessing and Dedication of the Candle of Atonement for the Cathedrals and Churches of Ireland

This blessing and dedication ritual can take the place of the usual Penitential Rite at Mass or can be used as a separate moment during other liturgies or prayer times, e.g. the Liturgy of the Hours:

Introduction by Celebrant

On this Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse,
we acknowledge our sins and
to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

During the Penitential Rite at the closing Mass for World Meeting of the Families, and reflecting on what survivors of abuse had told him, Pope Francis implored the Lord's mercy for the crimes of abuse and asked forgiveness, as follows:

Pause for silent prayer

We ask forgiveness for the cases of abuse in Ireland, the abuse of power, the abuse of conscience and sexual abuse on the part of representatives of the Church. In a special way, we ask forgiveness for all those abuses that took place in different kinds of institutions directed by men and women religious and other members of the Church. We also ask forgiveness for cases in which many minors were exploited for their labour.

Lord have mercy; **Lord have mercy.**

We ask forgiveness for all those times when, as a Church, we did not offer to the survivors of any type of abuse, compassion and the pursuit of justice and truth by concrete actions. We ask forgiveness for some members of the hierarchy who took no responsibility for these painful situations and kept silent. We ask forgiveness.

Christ have mercy; **Christ have mercy.**

We ask forgiveness for those children who were taken away from their mothers and for all those times when so many single mothers who tried to find their children that had been taken away, or those children who tried to find their mothers, were told that this was a mortal sin. It is not a mortal sin; it is the fourth commandment! We ask forgiveness.

Lord have mercy; **Lord have mercy.**

May the Lord preserve and increase this sense of shame and repentance, and grant us the strength to ensure that it never happens again and that justice is done. **Amen.**

Lighting of the Candle of Atonement

We light this Candle of Atonement which shall burn in this Cathedral (and in the churches of our diocese) with the prayer:

CANDLE OF ATONEMENT

Lord, forgive us our many sins.

We grieve and repent with all our hearts
for having offended you, for our great failings
and neglect of the young and vulnerable.

We place all of those who have been hurt
by the Church in any way into your loving hands
and under the protection of Our Blessed Mother.

Lord, bring peace to their broken lives
and show us all the way out of darkness
and into the light of your Word.

May we as the people of God
be more fully human,
more fully Christ-like
and more fully your people,
that we may see the errors of the past
and go forward

with renewed hope and faith
in Christ and in our Church.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Some of the following Prayers of the Faithful may be included in the Intercessions of Mass.

May God the Merciful Father bring comfort and healing to victims and survivors of sexual abuse within the Church. **Lord, hear us.**

We pray that the Church will continue to carry out its promise to protect, and pledge to heal, the most vulnerable in their dioceses. **Lord, hear us.**

For all who promote a culture of safeguarding in our Diocese; may they always strive to provide safe and nurturing environments for children and young people. **Lord, hear us.**

We pray that all who provide help for the abused may act with wisdom and compassion in their healing ministries. **Lord, hear us.**

Resources: Irish Bishops Conference



The Towards Healing Counselling and Support Service reflects the commitment of the Catholic Church in the thirty two counties of Ireland to meet the support needs of survivors of Religious, Institutional and Clerical Abuse and their families. The Towards Healing Counselling and Support Service was established in February 2011.

Phone Lines

Freephone 1800 303416 (Rep of Ireland)

Freephone 0800 0963315 (Northern Ireland and UK)

Hearing impaired Text Line Number: 085-8022859



Towards Peace

Towards Peace is an independent organization that provides a spiritual support and professional service for survivors of physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuse who suffered in an institutional, clerical or religious setting in Ireland. Funded by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Association of Missionary and Religious in Ireland, the vision of Towards Peace is to provide a safe supportive space for people and their families, whose spiritual life has been damaged by abuse. Through spiritual accompaniment with a qualified spiritual director, Towards Peace endeavours to accompany people as they seek their own experience of spiritual peace, one step at a time. Towards Peace is also a response to the continually growing understanding of the spiritual impact of the trauma of abuse and seeks to raise awareness about this within the Church. The Towards Peace Spiritual Support Service is free of charge and for more please see www.towardshealing.ie

Towards Peace Coordinator: Ms. Una Allen

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Mobile: + 353 (0) 86 7710533

The service is available on Monday and Tuesday from 9am – 4pm and on Wednesday from 9am -12 noon.

For out of office hours, please call us on +353 (0) 86 7710533 and leave a message, we will respond to your call as soon as possible.

Email: towardspeace@iecon.ie

Website: www.towardspeace.ie