

Dear Friends,

Enclosed please find materials to help in preparing your Masses for Prayer and Penance for the weekend of February 3 and 4. Please remember that every Mass that weekend should focus on praying for healing for the victims of clergy abuse and for repentance for the sins of the church.

When planning your Masses, please keep a few things in mind:

Remember that the people in the pews may include victims and their families. When choosing words, prayers and songs keep that in mind and consider how it will be heard by a victim.

Talk about the sexual abuse "crisis" rather than "scandal". Scandal sounds like we are worried about the impact on the reputation of the church more than the impact on the victims.

Don't forget the victims who did not become survivors. There are many who died from suicide, substance use, and the wear and tear of living with what happened to them.

This is a Mass of Prayer and Penance. We are praying for forgiveness for the church and for healing for those who were harmed. In addressing both those things please be careful not to accidentally make it sound like the victim needs to be seeking forgiveness.

 Please use this as an opportunity to make sure that you have the poster telling people how to get help, hanging somewhere visible in the entry way to each church. If you need more posters, please contact us at 617-746-5985.

This would also be a good time to make sure that all employees and volunteers have been screened and PGC trained.

The Office of Pastoral Support and Child Protection is available to provide parishes with assistance and outreach both for prevention efforts and for healing within the parish community. Survivors of clergy abuse, together with pastoral support staff, are available to meet for conversation with parishioners. We are also available to bring a rosary for victims of abuse to your parish, followed by a discussion if desired.

Please remember that, if anyone was abused by clergy or other church representatives, regardless of when it happened, we want to know so that we can help. People seeking to report clergy abuse should call the Office of Pastoral Support and Outreach at 617-746-5995.

Homily Suggestions for the Mass of Prayer and Penance for those affected by Clergy Sexual Abuse — Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

This is a difficult topic to address in the context of a homily. For some people, this special Mass intention will bring back painful memories. For some there may be a sense of fatigue concerning this issue following fifteen years of it being held up as an inexcusable failure of the Church. Perhaps you feel a sense of weariness towards the issue. However, this is a real crisis with countless real victims of abuse and this is a Mass concentrating on prayer and penance for them. With recognition of these challenges it is recommended that homily preparation include time spent praying with the readings for February 4th.

The impact of the clergy sexual abuse crisis continues to resonate in the Archdiocese of Boston and the Church throughout the world. For many who were abused by clergy, the harm and the pain are still significant factors in their lives. A survey of Catholics in the Archdiocese last year confirmed that this issue remains a significant concern. Considering these findings, we may feel the burdens of Job but we must be strong with Saint Paul and follow the Jesus' example in the Gospel.

This Mass of Prayer and Penance is a public action of the Church. We are called to convey the Church's deep sorrow for the harm caused by other priests' crimes and sins against children. While the Archdiocese can acknowledge many efforts to as best possible ensure the safety of children, we should not be defensive. The crisis did happen, children's lives and those of family members and friends were devastated. Reparation and healing will be an ongoing work in progress during our lifetimes.

The reading from Job acknowledges the reality of pain, suffering and evil in the world. Many people carry burdens that can lead them to depression and despair. It is important to remember God can bring light to any darkness and can bring good even from that which is bad.

In the epistle Saint Paul speaks of who we are as preachers and how he "became weak, to win over the weak."

And Mark's Gospel shares that in the midst of the many demands of ministry Jesus found time to pray, recognizing that on a human level he could not respond to every person who was asking for his time and attention.

The epistle from St. Paul may lead to a reflection on this day of prayer and penance. There are those who were abused as minors by priests who think the Archdiocese has forgotten them. We must continue to assure them and all the members of the Church that we have not forgotten them and that we continue to express our sorrow for the harm they suffered.

The Gospel speaks of Jesus healing many demons. At least many of those who have been abused by clergy carry burdens which are a result of their abuse, burdens for which they are not responsible. On this day of Prayer and Penance we point to Jesus, who joined the world in suffering,

the innocent lamb sacrificed upon the Cross, to show us the way to the light of new life in Christ. As we point to Jesus' healing power we must be able to genuinely express the Church's sorrow with an awareness that there may be people at this or any celebration of Mass who are among those who were harmed and hurt by clergy sexual abuse. We must also recognize that there are many no longer with us at the celebration of Mass because of the harm they or their loved ones suffered, and we are called to pray also for their healing and peace.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL (suggestions) 

Lord, in Your mercy, we seek forgiveness for our sins, for our actions and inactions, that resulted in the harm of children who should have been safe in our care, we pray to the Lord.

For all those who were abused, that they may find safety, healing, and the peace of Jesus Christ, we pray to the Lord.

For those victims who have died, especially those who died through suicide or addiction, unable to cope with the pain, that they may now live in peace with Christ, we pray to the Lord.

For those who are still silent, facing their pain alone, that they may find someone to trust who can hear their story and help them move toward healing, we pray to the Lord.

For those who are traveling the journey of healing, that they may receive help, support, and comfort from those around them and know the love and peace of Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

For those family and friends who share the pain and travel the road with those who were abused, that they too may find peace in Christ, we pray to the Lord.

For Pope Francis, Cardinal Sean, and the world's Bishops, that they have the wisdom, strength, and courage to lead the Church to be always a safe place for all children and adults, we pray to the Lord.

For those who seek to keep our children safe every day, that we succeed in our efforts and create a world in which all children can thrive, we pray to the Lord.

Possible Bulletin Announcement:

All Masses for Sunday, February 4th will be offered for Prayer and Penance at the request of Cardinal Sean. The Mass is being held in response to a call from Pope Francis for all episcopal conferences across the world to have a Day of Prayer and Penance in recognition of harm done by clergy sexual abuse within the church. It will be an opportunity to seek repentance for the sins of the church, to pray for all those who were abused, and to pray for continued healing for all those impacted by the abuse including those who were abused, families, members of our church, and the community at large.

So that you can make appropriate decisions for your children, please keep in mind that the topic of the clergy sexual abuse crisis will be addressed during the Mass. If you know of anyone who has stepped away from the church because of the clergy abuse crisis, please let them know about this Mass in case they would like to attend. If you know of anyone who has been sexually abused by clergy or a member of the church, please let them know that the Office of Pastoral Support and Outreach is there to help. To report abuse or get help please call 617-746-5995.

Prayer For Healing and Reconciliation

From USCCB

~~Almighty and~~ most loving God, through your Son,
Your compassion brought healing to many.

We ask for your healing once more for all who have been profoundly wounded by abuse, especially those who have been hurt by Your ministers.

In ~~Your mercy~~, we also ask for forgiveness. Words cannot express fully the sorrow we have for the great harm done by who were called to be trusted.

In Your greatness we ask for the grace to be a source of healing to all who have been abused and to be ever vigilant in protecting all your people.

Grant, ~~we pray~~, our prayers for healing and forgiveness, for we ask for them through Your Son, Christ our Lord, Amen.

HYMNS

The attached list of possible hymns is not all inclusive and you should feel free to choose others. Whatever you choose, keep in mind that there may be abuse survivors or their loved ones at Mass. You should think about how the choices may be perceived by them. Please remember to look closely at all verses of the hymns you choose. Avoid references that could be misinterpreted such as Tom Booth's "Here I Am" which includes the line, "Here I am waiting like a lover." Also, know that hymns that promise God's protection, such as "Be not Afraid" can be off putting to those who were abused. 

There is a relatively new song written by Brother Michael Herry in Australia. It is a good fit for this Mass. It can be found at

<http://www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org.au/index.php/resources/spirituality-prayer/item/2526-hymn-of-healing-for-the-church>

You can download the sheet music and lyrics for free from that site. Lyrics are below on the next page.

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A Hymn of Healing for the Church

Here we stand in silent witness to the church we love and name,
Hearing pleas of children's voices, for our part in sin and shame
Father we have hurt so deeply, trust betrayed, dark secrets kept,
Now the truth cries out in daylight, tears of old now freely wept.

Stir in us a deep compassion, firm resolve to heal the past.
Help us understand the darkness, lest again it comes to pass.
Lord we pray for those so wounded. Hear the cry of victim's pain.
Help us seek the path of justice. Help us see the light again.

Finding hope in Jesus promise, 'I am with you, do not fear.'
Striving on through storm and struggle, knowing still our God is near.
Loving God your mercy send, and like the fires that rake this land,
May new life in wondrous color, through the ashes, bloom again.

Hymns available through OCP

Prayer of St. Francis
Out of the Depths – Scott Soper
There is a Longing – Ann Quigley
Signed by Ashes – Kevin Kiel
We Are Many Parts – Marty Haagen ✱
Seek The Lord – O'Connor
There is a Wideness in God's Mercy – Frederick Faber
Save Your People – Jim Farrell
You Are Mine – David Haas
Here I am Lord – David Schutte
From the Depths We Cry To You – Owen Alscott
We Are Companions on the Journey – Carey Landry

*Surely the Presence of
Endless is your love ✱*

Turn to Me – John Foley ✱
You Are The Healing – Scott Soper
Be With Me, Lord – Tom Booth
Create In Me – Tom Kendzia
Hosea – Western Priory
We are Called – David Haas ✱
Open My Eyes – Jesse Manibusan
Create in Me – Bob Hurd
Create in Me – Tom Kendzia
Psalm 51 – Ricky Manalo
Amazing Grace

GIA Hymns not available through OCP

Make Us Turn To You – Paul Inwood

Mercy, O God – Francis Patrick O'Brien