



NATIONAL DAY OF SORROW & PROMISE
LITURGY BOOKLET

At the Foot of the Cross

Sunday 24 October 2021



Catholic Religious Australia

ORDER OF SERVICE

GATHERING & STORYTELLING

Gathering Hymn/Music
Testimony of Survivors

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Gospel Reading & Brief Reflection
Guided Reflection: Imaginative
Contemplation

RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

A Psalm of Longing
Ritual Gesture

LITANY OF SORROW & PROMISE

CLOSING PRAYER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge and pay respect to
the First Nations people as the
original and ongoing custodians of
this land. We commit ourselves to
actively work alongside indigenous
people for reconciliation and justice.



PREPARE FOR OUR PRAYER TIME



SACRED SPACE

Create a sacred space. Include a cross or crucifix placed against a rock.

Add some smaller rocks or pebbles at the base of the cross (these will be used as part of a ritual gesture).

As you gather, you may wish to invite informal storytelling: Is there a story behind this particular cross/crucifix? If so, share the story. From whom or where did it come? Why is it significant?

GUIDED REFLECTION

If you are the person leading the guided reflection, read it ahead of time and note the appropriate places for pause or silence.

MUSIC

Choose which (and how much) music you will use. Suggestions are included in the liturgy. Alternative links are included overleaf.



MUSIC

Three musical reflections are included in this prayer service. However you may wish to replace the suggested music with a sung hymn or a musical composition of your choice, or with silence. Some suggestions are listed below.

Traditional Christian hymns

- [Pie Jesu](#)
by Andrew Lloyd Weber
sung by Charlotte Church
- [Stabat Mater Dolorosa](#)
(Giovanni Battista Pergolesi)

*Stabat mater dolorosa
juxta Crucem lacrimosa,
dum pendebat Filius.*

*At the Cross her station keeping,
stood the mournful Mother weeping,
close to her Son to the last.*

- [At the Cross Her Station Keeping](#)
A-capella interpretation, Donna Gibson
- [Abide With Me](#)
Audrey Assad
- [Abide With Me](#)
Kings College Choir Cambridge

Contemporary Christian worship

- [At the Foot of the Cross](#)
By Kathryn Scott
- [At the Foot of the Cross](#)
By Rob Galea
- [Let Your Mercy Wash Over Us](#)
By Trevor Thomson
- [As the Deer Longs](#) (Ps 42/43)
By Bob Hurd
- [Prayer Before the Cross](#)
By John Michael Talbot



GATHERING & STORYTELLING

Hymn: *As the Deer*
[Piano instrumental by Martin Nystrom](#)
(Or play/sing a hymn of your choice)

Leader: We come together
To pray
To remember
To grieve
To acknowledge sin
To ask forgiveness

We come together, also,
to express gratitude,
for courageous sharings,
compassionate presence,
and new beginnings.

Leader: As a first step, we gather.
Let's not rush this step.
Our coming together is important.
Each of us brings a presence that is unique,
irreplaceable in the body of Christ.
Let us pause for a moment to take this in.

Pause

Our presence invites listening.
Deep, Spirit-filled listening,
attuned with the ear of the heart.

Our presence invites storytelling, in a space where it is safe to do so.

Let us listen, then, to the stories of those who have suffered abuse, who generously and courageously share their lives with us, and who summons us to a healing response.



Note to facilitator:

One or both of the following stories can be read aloud by a designated reader, or read silently by participants. Or, play [audio](#) or [video](#) of Rhianne's story.

SURVIVOR TESTIMONIES

RHIANNE'S STORY

I am proud to be an Aboriginal woman.

My parents were Catholic in name but neither of them practiced.

I was constantly bullied as a child for being proud of my Aboriginal roots and was regularly called nasty names.

Some of the darkest moments of my life included first being exposed to pornography at the age of 9, and then the sexual abuse I experienced for 4 years at the hands of a close family member when I was 13 to 17 years old.

Entering adulthood was pure hell for me. I wasn't white enough or black enough to be Indigenous or Caucasian.

I was desperate to fit in and to find resolution around my years of sexual abuse. I had no idea of my identity, and I tried to remain hidden from everyone and everything. I just wanted to disappear.

I was 25 when I first disclosed my childhood abuse to another person – that was to my mum shortly before her death.

I was fortunate to have a very strong bond with my mum, otherwise I don't know who else I would have been able to tell, and even today I may never have found freedom from my burning secret.

It was after Mum's death at age 25 that I just gave up. I became so desperate for my voice to be heard. I needed compassion and tender counsel. I went through a string of relationships and began to pack on weight as I didn't want to be attractive and appealing.

My abuse led me down a very dysfunctional path. After my mother's death, I entered several deeply abusive relationships, became addicted to drugs, especially to meth and yet today I am grateful to have now been clean for 5 years.

I'm fortunate that the Christian community has been helping me to face my past. I am learning to invite JESUS into my pain so as to find newness of life. He is teaching me so many new things, and especially not to be afraid.

Amazingly, Jesus gave me a dream about his Mother, Mary. I have spent years trying to deal with the grief of my mother's death, and suddenly Jesus gives me his Perfect Mother to walk alongside me, to love me, and to help me not only heal but to trust more deeply in God. I am now excited about being received into the Catholic Church before Christmas and entering into the Sacramental life of the Body of Christ.

My general well-being is in a good place today. In fact, it has never been stronger. This is mostly as a result of 'divine therapy' courtesy of the Holy Spirit working in my life. I would love for others to taste of what I am experiencing.

The support I am receiving from other Catholics and Christians is saving my life, and we've no idea how many more lives are being saved and might just be saved in the future through the Good News of Jesus Christ.



STEVE'S STORY

Steve was severely sexually and physically abused as a 12-14 year old at a Catholic high school run by a religious congregation. The Principal of the school was his abuser and Steve's experiences of abuse had a severe effect on his life. He left school at 15 and worked in various unskilled roles until his late 20s when he suffered mental illness resulting in hospitalisation and treatment. Struggling with various bouts of severe depression and anxiety, Steve made a number of suicide attempts and self-medicated with alcohol and drugs.

Steve's widowed mother has always been his supporter and carer. His grandmother was also a significant presence. Steve is now in his fifties and, while still suffering some anxiety and depression, life is much improved. He came forward about his abuse some 5 years ago. Following police interviews, a court case, a financial settlement from the Congregation and a Pastoral Meeting, he has now found healing in his belonging to his local Catholic community.

Steve and his mother were christened in the Anglican church, though never involved in regular practice of their faith. They were supported in their local community by a Catholic friend. Steve and his mother were interested in this Catholic man's strong faith and his supportive community. Eventually they took the steps to being Confirmed and receiving First Eucharist in the Catholic Church. They attended Mass and other healing services regularly. With the support of the local Catholic community, they feel less isolated and have received many blessings, especially acceptance and a caring community.

Leader: We pause to ponder these stories.

[Silence. Or invite a brief response from the group if it seems appropriate.]

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

GOSPEL READING

Leader: Having attuned our minds and hearts to the graced testimony of our sister and brother, let us listen to God's word in sacred Scripture.

Reader: John 19:25-27 (NRSV)

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son."

Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

BRIEF REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL

*“Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus [was] his mother”
(Jn 19:25).*

Amid a scene of suffering and abandonment, Mary stands.¹

She neither collapses in hysteria, nor flees the scene. She stands.

She is helpless, yet she stands. Present. Near. Accompanying her son to his last dying breath.

Powerless, yet she stands. Unable to prevent, change or rescue her son from these events. But she stands with him.

She has no answers, but she has her presence. She has her beating heart. She has her will, her power to choose. And she chooses to stay. The crucified One feels her presence. He knows she is there. And John too.

He is so alone.

Abandoned even by his Father, or so it seems. And yet, somehow, he is held. They are there. They are there. They are still there. Standing. Together.

“Woman, here is your son.”

“Here is your mother.”



¹ Further reading: see spirituality author Ron Rolheiser OMI on the theme, “Mary Under the Cross”, [ronrolheiser.com. https://ronrolheiser.com/mary-under-the-cross-6-of-6/#.YUBEonORU2w](https://ronrolheiser.com/mary-under-the-cross-6-of-6/#.YUBEonORU2w)

GUIDED REFLECTION

Leader/Facilitator:

Let's listen to the Gospel again, and this time enter and imaginatively contemplate the scene. We invite the Holy Spirit to speak to us through our imagination, feelings, memories, longings...

Take a breath. Sit comfortably. Perhaps close your eyes.

As you listen again to the events unfolding at the foot of the cross, picture the scene and engage your senses, pay attention to small details, of place, people, climate, sound, sight, smell, touch... what is said, what is done... what goes unseen, unspoken.

Ask yourself: where do I find myself in this scene? Observing from a distance, or near others? Am I speaking, or silent? Active, or still? What feelings and desires arise within me, as I enter the scene at the foot of the cross?

Reader: John 19:25-27 (NRSV)

[Pause after the Gospel is read. You may wish to finish the reflection here in some moments of silent prayer. Or continue the reflection, with a few gentle, guiding thoughts, such as those that follows.]

Leader/Facilitator:

Contemplating this scene,

I might ask myself three questions:

What do I see? Where do I stand? Who do I hold?

Let's take each of those, one by one.

What do I see?

Perhaps I see nothing. Perhaps I am blinded by pain.

All is dark. And I am numb.

Perhaps I see clearly: Pain. Injustice. Innocence and Goodness crucified.

Or maybe I see the two thieves of Luke's Gospel, two perpetrators of crime, held in the compassionate presence of the crucified Christ.

What do I see?

Where is there Pain?

Where is there Hope?

Where is there Healing?

Pause

Where do I stand?

Am I able to stand, or do I wish to flee, to turn away.

Do I feel myself falling?

Do I stand with the crucified one?

Do I stand with others who suffer under the cross:
Mary, John, and others present?
Do I stand with those absent from the foot of the
cross?
Can I stand, also, with the abuser (Roman soldier) in
his own story of woundedness?

Where do I stand?
Where do I place myself amid the pain?
Where do I find hope?
Where do I identify healing?

Pause

Who do I hold?

As I contemplate this Gospel scene, I ask myself:
Who embodies this crucifixion moment for me?
A particular person, someone who has been abused?
A perpetrator?
My church community? Myself?
How do I 'hold' that person, or that
family/community, in their unique story and journey?
How do I hold myself, in my own needs?

Can I remain steadfast in the Church's promise to walk
with those abused? Do they know that they are
recognised, not forgotten, that they are being held by
us, being held by Christ, through us, his body?

How do I hold this person, this family, this community...

Amidst their pain? In their hope? In their healing?

Continue your reflection in silence.

Talk with Jesus, to Mary, to a loved one, about your experience of this prayer time.

PAUSE

You may wish to share a thought or an insight with those gathered. Or, simply be quiet, mindful, present.

PAUSE

Let us bring these reflections together as we listen to:

[*Stabat Mater Dolorosa*](#) (Giovanni Battista Pergolesi)

Academy of Ancient Music (London)



RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

Leader: Let us pray together
in the cries of the Psalmist;
words of lament,
yet also words of quiet, deep-down trust.

A PSALM OF LONGING (Psalm 42, NRSV)

Reader: My soul thirsts for the living God.

All: My soul thirsts for the living God.

Reader:

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'

All: My soul thirsts for the living God

These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.
Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

All: *My soul thirsts for the living God*

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.
Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.
By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

All: *My soul thirsts for the living God*

I say to God, my rock,
'Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?'

As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'

All: *My soul thirsts for the living God*

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

All: *My soul thirsts for the living God*

You can also
sing this Psalm:

[*As the Deer*](#)

[*Longs*](#)

by Bob Hurd



RITUAL GESTURE



*All are invited to take a rock
from the foot of the cross.*

*Hold, feel it, pause to
contemplate its meaning for you.*

*Take this rock with you as you go
forth today.*

*Place it in your pocket,
or on your desk,
or at your prayer space.*

*Let it symbolise the burden carried by people who have
suffered sexual abuse.*

*Perhaps it symbolises for you a particular person who
yearns to be set free.*

*Let this rock summons you to accompany this person who is
weighed down, in action or in prayer.*

*Bring him/her to mind
each time you contemplate this rock.*

*Be with the abused one, help carry the burden,
So that it may be released, at the foot of the cross.*

LITANY OF SORROW AND PROMISE

Leader: At the foot of the cross

All: We stand

Leader: Behold the abused one

All: We stay, we are here

Leader: In this darkest hour

All: We remain, we are present

Leader: In our broken Church

All: We hold one another

Leader: In fear and helplessness

All: We are here, we do not flee

Leader: We are here
at the foot of Jesus' cross
with Mary and John
with every abused child or adult
with every parent, friend or carer
with each wounded one.

All: God of steadfast love
hold us, that we may hold fast to you.
Forever shall you be our God.
Forever shall we be your people.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: With such prayer in our hearts, we give thanks
for God's faithfulness and love.
We recommit ourselves today
as disciples of Jesus Christ,
as members of his body.

All: O God
Fill us with your steadfast love,
Give us listening tears, sensitivity of soul.
Forgive us our sin, blindness, hardness of heart.
Grant us strength of resolve, and constructive
agency in the service of those wounded by the
sin of sexual abuse.
Send your Holy Spirit upon our honest efforts
in justice, repentance, healing,
as we refashion, with you, a world of
resurrection and life,
transformation and hope.
We ask this through Christ Jesus.
Amen

Leader: Mindfully, we make the sign of the cross.

HYMN

[At the Foot of the Cross](#)

by Kathryn Scott

Or, your choice of music – see suggestions on page 4.

PROMISE STATEMENT

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) upholds the dignity of all and is committed to promoting and maintaining safe and supportive environments, particularly for children and adults at risk. All people have the right to be protected from abuse. Inclusivity, which is at the heart of the Gospel, and therefore, our values, shapes our relationship with children, adults at risk, their families, and the community.

We encourage environments that empower children and adults at risk to speak up and to be heard. We recognise the role of families and community in safeguarding children and adults at risk and welcome their input on how to improve the way we relate to them. We are building a culture of care, accountability and transparency upheld in our policies and processes including recruitment, induction, and daily operations. We are actively committed to building prevention and safeguarding practices into everyday practice and implementing governance reforms throughout our Church.

We act appropriately with children and adults at risk with whom we come into contact, including maintaining boundaries and exercising acceptable standards of behaviour at all times. All staff, volunteers and contractors are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the legislative requirements of relevant jurisdictions and our own complaints and safeguarding policies. Any concerns that are identified or brought forward in any way are acted on appropriately, sensitively and in a timely manner.



If any distressful memories or feelings have arisen for you during this time of prayer, we encourage you to seek support from a friend, colleague, professional counsellor or pastoral supervisor. The following services may help:

- **Lifeline Australia** - 13 11 14 - Crisis support and suicide prevention
- **Beyondblue** - 1300 22 4636 - Support for depression, suicide prevention
- **Kids Helpline** - 1800 55 1800 - Phone Counselling Service
- **Suicide Call Back Service** 1800 022 222
- **mensline** 1300 78 99 78
- **1800 Respect** 1800 737 732
- In an emergency call triple zero (000)

Sexual abuse is a crime. If you are aware of sexual abuse, contact Police Assistance Line by calling **131 444** or Federal Crime Stoppers: **1800 333 000**.

It is also important for a person who has been abused to contact the congregation itself, which is required to comply with State laws and report allegations to the police or other authorities.



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