

**NATIONAL DAY OF SORROW & PROMISE  
LITURGY BOOKLET**

*The Lord hears the cry of the poor*

Sunday 23 October 2022



## ORDER OF SERVICE

### GATHERING & STORYTELLING

Gathering music  
Testimony of survivors  
A lament in song

### LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Scripture reading  
Lectio Divina

### RESPONDING

Psalm  
Prayers of intercession  
Personal commitment

### PROMISE STATEMENT

### 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.



## GATHERING & STORYTELLING

We gather by listening to gentle sounds of nature.

Play a recording of a natural landscape (e.g., ocean waves; wind in the trees; birdsong) - [Calming Seas](#) is an example from many online options.

Or:

DADIRRI ('deep listening'): 3-minute video available at the [Miriam Rose Foundation](#).

Leader: As God's people, we gather to remember and lament the story of sexual abuse in our church and our society.

All: We remember. We listen. We lament.

Leader: As the body of Christ, we gather to draw healing strength from our scriptural story and from one another.

All: We remember. We listen. We lament.

Leader: As a people born of water and Spirit, we gather to recommit our lives to the God who saves.

All: We remember. We listen. We lament.

Leader: Our presence here today  
invites deep, Spirit-filled listening,  
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 courageously share their lives with us.

## LISTENING TO SURVIVOR STORIES

*One or both of the following stories might be read aloud by a designated reader, or read silently by participants. Alternatively, play the [Video of Joseph's story](#).*

### SUE'S STORY

Sue had been on a school sports camp when the sports teacher had approached her and said he would give her some private coaching to help with her ball skills. She was just 14 and she thought he was pretty good to offer that. He had been at the school for a couple of years and seemed pretty popular with everyone. Even the nuns who ran the school seemed to give him their admiration because he put in so much extra time in coaching.

The coaching wasn't what she expected. He started cuddling and kissing her and told her he thought she was much more mature than so many of the other girls in the school. Sue really liked being his "special girl" and would let him touch her and she would touch him because he told her how important it was that she learnt about her body.

This went on for a couple of months and it was only when Sue found out that he had other "special girls" that she felt wretched and betrayed.

She stopped seeing him but kept her secret because she was too ashamed and embarrassed to tell anyone. Sue had great difficulty trusting guys and felt embarrassed about her body. She started drinking alcohol and at times using marihuana, because it made her feel better – or at least not feeling so bad about herself.

Sue's story is one of the many 'hidden' experiences of sexual abuse of people who need to be heard, understood and healed.



## JOSEPH'S STORY

[View Joseph's Story:  
click here](#)

I come from a loving, faith-filled family of nine children where I am number six in the pecking order. And yet there have been times throughout my life where I have felt like I was an orphan, but I could never understand why.

It was only in recent years, after entering therapy, that I started to accept the memories of being sexually abused as a child.

I didn't know that I bore the hallmarks of an abuse survivor. So, this revelation gradually explained the overwhelming feelings of isolation I'd always felt.

I'm a Christian, so prayer is important to me. I have learnt to reflect on my past abuse whilst asking Jesus to hold my hand through the darkness I am facing.

I've come to understand why I've always felt "voiceless", always putting other people's needs before my own, and even being fearful of giving attention to my own important needs.

It's when others  
... actively stop,  
... give me their time,  
... and listen to what seems like my verbal rambling  
that I start to find and to use my voice.

This is gradually helping me come to terms with my past.

I can honestly say that when I'm *truly* heard,  
... I experience being known,  
... I experience healing,  
... and I grow in my self-worth and in my God-given dignity.

I am strengthened to move forward into a happier, more fulfilling life.

PAUSE

## A LAMENT IN SONG

After a pause, continue to reflect by listening to

['We Sing For Those Whose Song Is Silent'](#).

Written by John L Bell (1949- ). Text: © 2017, WGRG, c/o Iona Community, GIA Publications, Inc. Tune: *Wer nur den lieben Gott* by Georg Neumark (1621-1681). Performed and filmed in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle for its [Perpetual Day of Remembrance](#).



## LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Leader: Let us open our ears and hearts to God's word in sacred Scripture.

Reader: Sirach 35:16-22,26 (NRSV)

The Lord ...

will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged.

He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan,  
or the widow when she pours out her complaint.

Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek  
as she cries out against the one who causes them to fall?

One whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be  
accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds.

The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,  
and it will not rest until it reaches its goal;

it will not desist until the Most High responds  
and does justice to the righteous, and executes  
judgement. ....

His mercy is as welcome in time of distress  
as clouds of rain in time of drought.



## LECTIO DIVINA

In an act of 'sacred listening', we ponder the Scripture.

**1. I listen to the Scripture as it is read aloud.**

Reflect: What word or phrase attracts my attention? I ponder it quietly. Then, I might like to share it with the group.

**2. I listen to the Scripture a second time.**

Reflect: In what way is the Holy Spirit speaking to my heart? I ponder this, quietly. Then, if I wish, I share briefly with the group.

**3. I listen to the Scripture a third time.**

Pray: How does this passage move me to 'speak' from my heart? Silently, I share my inner thoughts with God. Then, if I wish, I share something of my prayer experience with the group.

**4. I listen to the Scripture a fourth time.**

I rest, silently, in the presence of God and my companions.



## RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

Leader: In the voice of the Psalmist,  
Let us draw close to the broken-hearted,  
while trusting in God's nearness and care.

Sing, or listen to, the hymn based on Psalm 34 by John Foley SJ,  
[The Lord Hears the Cry Of The Poor](#) (this recording: Emmaus Music).

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Leader: We bring our prayers before God, aware of our  
brokenness, yet confident in the Lord's compassion and  
love.

Reader: We pray for all who have been sexually abused. May they  
find healing and justice in their lives. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for the families of those who have suffered sexual  
abuse: with the support of God's people, may they find the  
courage they need to face into their story. In hope, we  
pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for communities who live with the reality of sexual abuse having been committed in their midst: may they be helped to grieve and heal; may they be empowered to work for justice and transformation. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: In responding fully to the events of sexual abuse, we pray that we might forgive those who have committed sins of commission or omission. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for the whole Australian community: that we will all value the gift of human sexuality and treat one another with respect. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Leader: Gracious God, source of all life and relationship, turn your ear to the cries of your people and renew us in your mercy. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

## PERSONAL COMMITMENT

### Leader

The gift of a listening heart is one way by which we can bear Christ's loving presence in a broken world.

The simple act of listening can do much good –  
to heal,  
to affirm personal dignity,  
to create space for 'more' to happen.

As an action-response going forward,  
Let us *commit to being better listeners*.

Attentive to the image of Catherine McAuley below, we peruse the ideas on page 12 and respond to the question:

What practical commitment can I make to 'be' Christ by the way I listen?



*Sculpture of Catherine McAuley: "Come, sit awhile"*

The beautiful artwork by sculptor Gael O'Leary, a joint project of the Sisters of Mercy and OLMC Parramatta, invites one to "come sit awhile, take solace and gather inspiration". [Learn more](#).

## TEN WAYS TO BE A BETTER LISTENER

1. Be fully present to the other. Pause all other activity.
2. Be attentive to this moment as 'sacred time'.
3. Don't rush in with words or advice.
4. Allow the Holy Spirit 'room' to move.
5. Look into the eyes of the one speaking.
6. Listen with your facial expression.
7. Allow for a pause; don't be afraid of silence.
8. Offer feedback as to what you are hearing.
9. Follow up the conversation, as appropriate.
10. [Share your own 'listening' tip with the group.]

Going forward: We resolve to continue to grow in our capacity to listen — to listen to all, attuned with the heart of Christ, and especially to the voices of the most vulnerable and wounded. In doing so, we draw on the wisdom of our vast spiritual tradition and from the everyday insights of people around us, such as Karyn Gagnon, [\*Learning to listen\*](#): (TEDxWinnipeg).

## CRA PROMISE STATEMENT

Turn to page p.14 and take a moment to revisit the CRA Promise Statement, or an equivalent statement of your congregation or diocese. Allow time for it to be read, aloud or silently, and digested prayerfully.



## CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: With open hearts,  
we give thanks for God's infinite mercy,  
as we recommit ourselves today  
as disciples of Jesus Christ.

All: Gracious God,  
fill us with your steadfast love.  
Give us listening ears, sensitivity of soul.  
Forgive us our sin, our deaf ears, our  
defensiveness or careless inattentiveness.  
Send your Holy Spirit upon our honest efforts  
to listen and respond to the cry of the abused,  
as we refashion, with you,  
a world of justice and compassion,  
where even the smallest voice is heard and  
each person's dignity respected and protected.  
We make this prayer in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

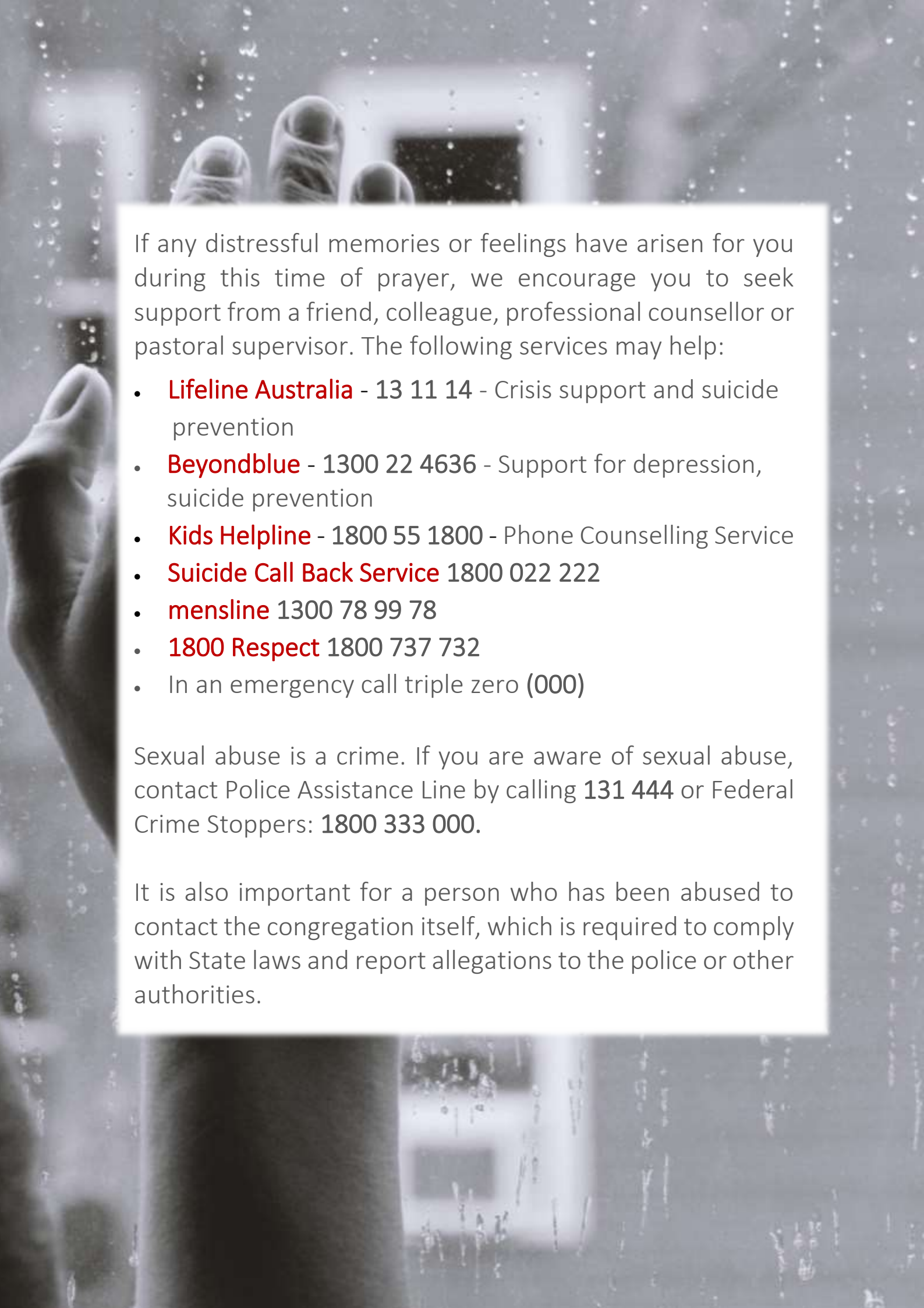


## PROMISE STATEMENT

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.



## WITH THANKS

Catholic Religious Australia wishes to express its gratitude to the following people for their work in developing this prayer resource:

Mr James Parker, True Identity Int'l

Ms Ann O'Brien, Counsellor & Supervisor

Fr Vince Casey, Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay

Fr Tom McDonough CP, Passionist Fathers

Ms Taylor Coutinho, Catholic Religious Australia

Ms Sylvia MacRitchie-Hook, Catholic Religious Australia

Dr Teresa Pirola, Catholic Religious Australia

Ms Anne Walker, Catholic Religious Australia

Gratefully acknowledged, too, is the assistance of Sr Mary-Louise Petro RSM, Ms Sophy Morley, Sr Louise Gannon RSJ and the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

**Photo** of Catherine McAuley Sculpture, used with permission of the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta. **Stock images:** Pixabay. **Video:** Joseph's Story produced for CRA by James Parker, True Identity Int'l. **Scripture:** *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition*, copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission.



P: +61 2 9557 2695

[www.catholicreligious.org.au](http://www.catholicreligious.org.au)

E: [secretariat@catholicreligious.org.au](mailto:secretariat@catholicreligious.org.au)

LEVEL 2, 9 MOUNT STREET, NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060

P O BOX 1518, NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059