




**NATIONAL DAY OF SORROW & PROMISE**  
**PRAYER SERVICE**

**GRIEVING ... LEARNING ... DREAMING**

Sunday 22 October 2023





I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
Isaiah 43:19

## ORDER OF SERVICE

### GATHERING & STORYTELLING

Gathering prayer

Testimony of a survivor

### LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Scripture readings

Reflection or silence

### RESPONDING

Song

Prayers of intercession

Statement of promise

### CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer & song

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge and pay respect to 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

## INTRODUCTION

*The facilitator might read or adapt these introductory words.*

For some years now, our Catholic community has been on a journey of repentance and healing in relation to the sexual abuse crisis in the Church and society.

It hasn't been easy. The journey continues with much heartache and ongoing challenges. Until each victim is acknowledged and until every child is safe, we will never rest in our expression of sorrow and concern.

It is also true that, as Religious communities and as a Church, we continue to renew and commit ourselves to positive steps in the work of ensuring that our attitudes, policies and structures truly reflect the gospel and protect children and other vulnerable people from harm.

We continue to lament the past and affirm our need to grow and change. *And* we take heart that growth and change are happening.

On this National Day of Sorrow & Promise 2023, let's take time to reflect on positive steps taken in awareness, learning and practice. Inspired by the theme of our recent CRA National Assembly, perhaps this is an appropriate moment to "dare to dream" of the church we are becoming, and want to become, *must* become, more fully.

Essentially, we are speaking here of the virtue of HOPE.

What is our hope at this time, as we commemorate our annual National Day of Sorrow and Promise? For what do we long, and strive? How do we want our communities to look, sound and feel as we labour in the Lord's vineyard?

Let's bring the intentions of our hearts and the fruits of our labours to God, as we gather in prayer today.

## OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Gracious God,

We give thanks for the ways that you teach and lead us, and especially through the courageously shared stories of victim-survivors of sexual abuse, of their families and supporters.

We are filled with sorrow for the harm done by the sin and mistakes of flawed human beings, imperfect church personnel and broken systems.

Yet we also have the courage to keep *learning* and the audacity to *dream* and to hope and act for a better world, healed and whole; a future where every vulnerable person is safe and protected, empowered and thriving.

We ask you to send forth your Spirit upon us now, as we gather to pray for the grace and strength needed to continue the healing journey.

We make this prayer in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.



## LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF A SURVIVOR

*This might be read aloud by a designated reader; or read silently by participants.*

### CHARLIE'S story\*

As I reflect on my past, I see there were times when I totally lost hope.

Three years of childhood sexual abuse destroyed my spirit and left my mind, my body and my future dreams entirely shattered. Nobody wanted to face and deal with the many signs of abuse that I was displaying, not even the so-called specialists in the psych ward I was forced to enter at the age of 11.

People just talked over me.

No one stopped to really listen to me and to come alongside me when as a teenager I disclosed details of my abuse. No one was there to grieve with me, to educate me on what had happened, to help me get back on track.

So, I joined the long queue of victim-survivors who throw themselves into alcohol, drugs, work, sex, reckless living and other addictions which we've used to try to numb the crippling pain and to fight off contemplating suicide.

At 16, I signed myself into rehab. It was there that I said "yes" to Jesus in my life. But even then, very few people truly encouraged me as I tried to turn my life around. Normal basic tasks for most people were like climbing mountains for me, and sometimes they still are today.

I felt constantly judged, misunderstood, and made to feel small, whilst expected to pick up my shattered life on my own and to put my tormented childhood and teenage years back together again.

\*Name changed for privacy.

Just one year ago, things began to change. One person stopped to truly listen to me. This person expressed a desire to understand and to honour my entire life's journey. This same person has become committed to walking alongside me as *together* we face my pain and past trauma before the cross of Christ.

Today at 25, I am recovering glimpses of my past dreams. I am slowly healing, no longer alone in my grieving. I am growing and am daring to believe that a great future lies ahead of me. I didn't need a team of experts to kickstart my recovery — just one genuine, committed friend willing to walk alongside me on my life journey.

**“I didn't need a team of experts to kickstart my recovery.**

**I needed just one genuine, committed friend willing to walk alongside me on my life's journey.”**

**- CHARLIE**



## LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

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

Reader: A reading from the prophet Jeremiah (29:11, NRSV)

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

PAUSE for silent reflection.

Reader: A reading from the Gospel of Luke (13:18-19, NRSV)

[Jesus said:] "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

The Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



## REFLECTION

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

You may wish to share a thought in response to the readings.

See, too, the reflection by Pope Francis on the next page.

OR

Simply rest in silence.



## POPE FRANCIS

To Christians, the future does have a name, and its name is Hope. Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naïve and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing. Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, does not simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow.

Hope is the door that opens onto the future. Hope is a humble, hidden seed of life that, with time, will develop into a large tree. It is like some invisible yeast that allows the whole dough to grow, that brings flavour to all aspects of life.

And it can do so much, because a tiny flicker of light that feeds on hope is enough to shatter the shield of darkness. A single individual is enough for hope to exist.

And that individual can be you. And then there will be another "you," and another "you," and it turns into an "us."

And so, does hope begin when we have an "us?" No. Hope began with one "you." When there is an "us," there begins a revolution.

Excerpt from Pope Francis' TED Talk, 2017. Full transcript and video at [Ted.com](https://www.ted.com)

## RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

We respond in song.

Select a hymn or song of your choice. Suggestions follow:

Be Thou My Vision (performed by Audrey Assad) [Video clip](#)

Songs of Comfort - 8 Hymns (Sunday 7pm Choir; Catholic & Christian Choral Music) [Songs with Lyrics](#)

I Can Only Imagine (Mercy Me) [Song](#) & [Lyrics](#)

Let your Mercy Wash Over Us (Trevor Thomson) [Video clip](#)

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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

Reader: We pray for those who have been sexually abused, including those betrayed by people within the Church. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for the families and communities of those abused. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for community leaders as they negotiate better ways of responding. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for the whole Church community. May we have the courage to own our failings and bring healing to those impacted by the sin of sexual abuse. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for those who have committed abuse; that in God's justice and mercy each will be led in their own unique journey of sorrow and repentance, to wholeness and new life. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for ourselves, in our struggles and authentic efforts for good. In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pause for our private intentions... In hope, we pray.

All: Loving God, hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving God, hear our prayers and enable our dreams for a fully redeemed community. With your help, may we imagine a lifegiving future and labour tirelessly for its realisation in our time.  
We make this prayer in Jesus' name.

All: 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.

Together, we say a statement of promise and commitment, as above, or another of your choosing.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Let us conclude our prayer time, in the words that Jesus taught us:

All:

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Closing hymn: [City of God](#)

Dan Schutte Journeysongs Third Edition: Volume 27 © 2012 OCP. All rights reserved. Provided to Youtube by The Orchard Enterprises

## ASSISTANCE

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

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**Stock images:** Pixabay.

**Scripture:** New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1989, 1993 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



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