

# Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse

## Resources | Reflections

### Introduction

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (PCPM) has highlighted the importance of prayer and suggested to Pope Francis that the worldwide Catholic Church should join together in a day of prayer. The Holy Father has welcomed this initiative.

In the Cycle of Prayer for England and Wales, this day is marked every year on the Friday of the fifth week of Lent.

On Friday 12 April the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales is encouraging the Catholic community to take part in a day of prayer for survivors of sexual abuse.

Three reflections are offered

- A meditation from a Survivor
  - Reflections on selected Psalms from the Liturgy of the Hours for Friday, 5th Week of Lent
  - Penitential Litany spoken by Pope Francis at the World Meeting of Families in Dublin, 2018
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### Meditation from a Survivor

We have been broken, hurt destroyed.

Our innocence taken away in the name of trust.

Our goodness tainted by another's selfishness.

Our hope destroyed by the evil of other's actions.

Our future darkened by secrecy and silence.

Our life would never be the same.

Our family life wrecked in the name of love.

Our friendships cannot be because we don't know true friendship;

we cannot do friendship for fear of what others will find.

Our love for ourselves and others lost as we cannot be our true selves.

*A Childhood Broken, Andrew Browne*

# Some Reflections from Liturgy of the Hours

## Psalm 34 (35) from Office of Readings

A psalm that reflects the experience of many people caught up in the abuse crisis. Pray this psalm, calling on the Lord to plead their cause – praying for those whose souls are forlorn.

O Lord, plead my cause against my foes;  
fight those who fight me.  
Take up your buckler and shield;  
arise to help me.

Take up the javelin and the spear  
against those who pursue me.

O Lord, say to my soul:  
“I am your salvation.”

Let those who seek my life  
be shamed and disgraced.  
Let those who plan evil against me  
be routed in confusion.

Let them be like chaff before the wind;  
let God’s angel scatter them.  
Let their path be slippery and dark;  
let God’s angel pursue them.

They have hidden a net for me wantonly;  
they have dug a pit.  
Let ruin fall upon them  
and take them by surprise.  
Let them be caught in the net they have hidden;  
let them fall into their pit.

But my soul shall be joyful in the Lord  
and rejoice in his salvation.  
My whole being will say:  
“Lord, who is like you  
who rescue the weak from the strong  
and the poor from the oppressor?”

Lying witnesses arise  
and accuse me unjustly.  
They repay me evil for good:  
my soul is forlorn.

When they were sick I went into mourning,  
afflicted with fasting.  
My prayer was ever on my lips,  
as for a brother, a friend.  
I went as though mourning a mother,  
bowed down with grief.

Now that I am in trouble they gather,  
they gather and mock me.  
They take me by surprise and strike me  
and tear me to pieces.  
They provoke me with mockery on mockery  
and gnash their teeth.

O Lord, how long will you look on?  
Come to my rescue!  
Save my life from these raging beasts,  
my soul from these lions.  
I will thank you in the great assembly,  
Amid the throng I will praise you.

Do not let my lying foes  
rejoice over me.  
Do not let those who hate me unjustly  
wink eyes at each other.

They wish no peace to the peaceful  
who live in the land.  
They make deceitful plots  
and with mouths wide open  
their cry against me is: “Yes!  
We saw you do it!”

O Lord, you have seen, do not be silent,  
do not stand afar off!  
Awake, stir to my defence,  
to my cause, O God!

Vindicate me, Lord in your justice,  
do not let them rejoice.  
Do not let them think: “Yes° we have won,  
we have brought him to an end!”

Let them be shamed and brought to disgrace  
who rejoice at my misfortune.  
Let them be covered with shame and confusion  
who raise themselves against me.

Let there be joy for those who love my cause.  
Let them say without end:  
“Great is the Lord who delights  
in the peace of his servant.”  
Then my tongue shall speak of your justice,  
all day long of your praise.

Glory be...

## Psalm 50(51) from Morning Prayer

A prayer of sorrow – repentance and trust in the compassion of God.

Pray this psalm for those who have perpetrated crimes against innocence – not that their sin is blotted out but they turn to God in sorrow and remorse.

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.  
In your compassion blot out my offence.  
O wash me more and more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offences truly I know them;  
my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;  
what is evil in your sight I have done.

That you may be justified when you give sentence  
and be without reproach when you judge  
O see, in guilt I was born,  
a sinner was I conceived.

Indeed you love truth in the heart;  
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom  
O purify me, then I shall be clean;  
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,  
that the bones you have crushed may thrill.  
From my sins turn away your face  
and blot out all my guilt.

A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

O rescue me, God my helper,  
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.  
O Lord, open my lips  
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

For in sacrifice you take no delight,  
burnt offering from me you would refuse,  
my sacrifice, a contrite spirit.  
A humbled, contrite heart you will not spurn.

In your goodness show favour to Sion:  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.  
Then you will be pleased with lawful sacrifice,  
holocausts offered on your altar.

Give me again the joy of your help;  
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,  
that I may teach transgressors your ways  
and sinners may return to you.

Glory be...

## Psalm 40(41) from Evening Prayer

Prayer for God's mercy – and trust in his providence.

Pray this psalm for those whose trust in people has been damaged – but who want to regain trust in God.

Happy the man who considers the poor and the weak.  
The Lord will save him in the day of evil,  
will guard him, give him life, make him happy in the land  
and will not give him up to the will of his foes.  
The Lord will help him on his bed of pain,  
he will bring him back from sickness to health.

As for me, I said: "Lord have mercy on me,  
heal my soul for I have sinned against you."  
My foes are speaking evil against me.  
"How long before he dies and his name be forgotten?"  
They come to visit me and speak empty words,  
their hearts full of malice, they spread it abroad.

My enemies whisper together against me.  
They all weigh up the evil which is on me:  
"Some deadly thing has fastened upon him,  
he will not rise again from where he lies."  
Thus even my friend, in whom I trusted,  
who ate my bread, has turned against me.

But you, O Lord, have mercy on me.  
Let me rise once more and I will repay them.  
By this I shall know that you are my friend,  
if my foes do not shout in triumph over me.  
If you uphold me I shall be unharmed  
and set in your presence for evermore.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,  
from age to age. Amen. Amen.

Glory be...

## Psalm 87(88) from Night Prayer

The only psalm that does not take us on a journey from anger or fear through to trust and hope. Pray this psalm for those who face tonight in this place of darkness and despair.

Lord my God, I call for help by day;  
I cry at night before you.  
Let my prayer come into your presence.  
O turn your ear to my cry

For my soul is filled with evils;  
my life is on the brink of the grave.  
I am reckoned as one in the tomb;  
I have reached the end of my strength.

Like one alone among the dead;  
like the slain lying in their graves;  
like those you remember no more,  
cut off, as they are, from your hand.

You have laid me in the depths of the tomb,  
in places that are dark, in the depths.  
Your anger weighs down upon me:  
I am drowned beneath your waves.

You have taken away my friends  
and made me hateful in their sight.  
Imprisoned, I cannot escape;  
my eyes are sunken with grief.

I call to you, Lord, all the day long;  
to you I stretch out my hands.  
Will you work your wonders for the dead?  
Will the shades stand and praise you?

Will your love be told in the grave  
or your faithfulness among the dead?  
Will your wonders be known in the dark  
or your justice in the land of oblivion?

As for me, Lord, I call to you for help:  
in the morning my prayer comes before you.  
Lord, why do you reject me?  
Why do you hide your face?

Wretched, close to death from my youth,  
I have borne your trials, I am numb.  
Your fury has swept down upon me;  
your terrors have utterly destroyed me.

They surround me all the day like a flood,  
they assail me all together.  
Friend and neighbour you have taken away:  
my one companion is darkness.

Glory be...

## Penitential Litany

*The following is adapted from the words Pope Francis spoke at the World Meeting of Families in Dublin, August 2018.*

*He reflected upon meeting with eight persons who are survivors of the abuse of power, the abuse of conscience and sexual abuse and wished to implore the Lord's mercy for these crimes and to ask forgiveness for them.*

We ask forgiveness for the cases of abuse in the Church, 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.

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.

We ask forgiveness for some members of the hierarchy who took no responsibility for these painful situations and kept silent. We ask forgiveness.

We ask forgiveness 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.

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.

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These resources have been prepared by the Liturgy Office and the Marriage and Family Life Team of the Bishops' Conference with assistance from Wellsprings [<http://www.wellsprings.org.uk>]. Text from The Psalms, a new translation © 1963 The Grail (England) administered by HarperCollins. Other material and layout © 2019 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.