

Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse

Resources | Devotions

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.

Two versions of familiar devotions are offered:

- Praying the Rosary — the Sorrowful Mysteries
 - Stations of the Cross
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Praying the Rosary

As we pray the Sorrowful Mysteries we contemplate with Mary the sufferings of Jesus – and focus on different aspects of the suffering of innocents around the world and over the years.

The Agony in the Garden

Jesus knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. [Luke 22:41–44]

We pray for those who begged God to stop horrific things happening to them – and finding their prayer going unanswered because of the cruelty or indifference of others who could have stopped them.

Our Father.
Hail Mary.
Glory be.

The Scourging at the Pillar

Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. [Mark 15:12–15]

We pray for those subjected to beatings and harsh treatments that left their bodies – their minds – their hearts – bruised and torn.

Our Father.
Hail Mary.
Glory be.

The Crowning with Thorns

And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" [John 19:2–5]

We pray for those subjected to humiliation and to psychological torture – words and actions that seared deep into their souls and scarred them irreparably.

Our Father.
Hail Mary.
Glory be.

Jesus carries his Cross

And as they led Jesus away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. [Luke 23:26–27]

We pray for those who have gone through long years carrying the burdens of shame and guilt – misplaced – but weighing them down and preventing them living life to the full.

Our Father.
Hail Mary.
Glory be.

Jesus dies on the Cross

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. [Matthew 27:45–50]

We pray for those who felt abandoned by the God they should have known as a loving and tender Father... for those whose capacity for love was crucified by their suffering... for those who have died bearing the wounds of the abuse they endured...

Our Father.
Hail Mary.
Glory be.

Stations of the Cross

a Way of the Cross lamenting the abuse of innocence in the Church.

1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Pilate - a man with power to save life – or deal out death. A man with the power to listen to evidence and to judge innocence or guilt. A man who chooses to wash his hands of the whole affair... who refuses to accept responsibility and condemns an innocent man to suffering and death.

And Jesus stands alongside all who are denied justice – who see people in power wash their hands of them.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

2nd Station: Jesus carries His cross

The burden of sin and shame is placed on Jesus' shoulders – to carry on his broken body on a journey that has no end but death in sight.

And Jesus understands the pain of carrying a burden too heavy to bear for one who is strong – a burden too great for one who is broken and alone.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

3rd Station: Jesus falls the first time

The burden too great – and Jesus falls underneath it... and wonders where the strength will come from to stand again... to walk again... to stumble again.

And Jesus sees the pain of falling and yearns to give strength to those who need to rise again – and face the world – to carry on as if nothing has happened.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

4th Station: Jesus meets his mother

Mary's heart is broken as she sees what human beings have done to her son.

Mothers – and fathers – suddenly realising just what has happened to their children... what they have done to their children. Feeling helpless in the face of their pain – and their own pain redoubles.

Mary – a pure and holy mother – whose heart is big enough to love the world – gazes into the hearts of those who suffer and longs that they know her tenderness and maternal love.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

Simon – a man pulled from the crowd to help Jesus to carry his cross. Unwilling at first – not wanting to be associated with someone so burdened – so condemned – so dirty and bloodied. But sharing the burden and coming to know the innocence of this man.

Simon – a model and companion for all who find themselves walking alongside victims – survivors – perpetrators.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

6th Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Veronica – a woman who wonders what she can do in the face of so much suffering... who sees the blood – the sweat – the tears – who responds with a small cloth, just wiping away what she can, knowing that she can make little difference in the great scheme of things – but doing what she can in love.

Veronica – a model and companion for those who can do so little – but do that little with as much love as they can,

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

7th Station: Jesus falls the second time

The weight of the cross – the physical suffering – the increasing weight of a heart full of pain and distress – a burden that leads to another fall. As relationships fail – as bright futures become dimmed – as all that was good and beautiful feels overwhelmed by sorrow and despair.

And Jesus kneels in the dust alongside lost hopes and dreams.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

8th Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

The laments of women and men who hear and see the truth and who feel powerless in the face of systemic indifference and lies – whose only response is to share the tears and the cries and the despair of those who have been abused by people they should have been able to trust.

And Jesus finds solace in those whose tears and laments echo his own.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

9th Station: Jesus falls a third time

For some, the pain of living is too great – and alcohol – and drugs – seem to offer a way out. But addiction only deepens the suffering – bringing bodies and minds and spirits lower until they give way under the weight of pain upon pain... and all seems lost.

And Jesus shares this utter despair... a fall from which there seems no hope of recovery – a fall that is but a short way from death.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

10th Station: Jesus is stripped of his clothing

The shame and humiliation as clothing is stripped away and Jesus' brutalised body is exposed for all to see. And the added pain of hearing the jeers and accusations that he brought this all upon himself.

And Jesus stands alongside those who have been humiliated and degraded... and who suffer even more as the stories emerge... and who experience the accusation that they were somehow culpable in it all.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

No escape as blow after blow cause excruciating pain and a human being is nailed to a cross – in agony – pain and degradation.

And Jesus holds in his wounded hands and heart all who have known such horrors – and loves them.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

12th Station: Jesus dies on the cross

When all that is good and true seems to have left the world – so it was when Jesus, the Son of God, died and darkness covered the earth. Utter loss as the Word of Life was silenced...

Silence...

13th Station: The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

The realisation of what has been done – but too late for some. Life has passed... relationships that should have brought life have died... a Church that held itself to be good and holy finds death and corruption at its heart

And Jesus shares those deaths – lying helpless in the arms of his mother and his friends who mourn for all that they too have lost.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

For Jesus, a place of embalming and rest... a place of waiting. A stone rolled in front of the tomb separating him from the rest of the world – where his body, they thought, would lie and return to the earth. A place of waiting and separation... but a place where God could work – where God could heal – where God could restore...

but not yet...

And Jesus waits with those who feel separated from the world – whose healing will be long and slow and full of stumbling stones along the way.

And we wait with them.

Prayer

Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection – you set us free.
Save us, Saviour of the World.

15th Station: The Empty Tomb

(Optional)

There is a silence...
of death...

The way is barred by a stone that is heavy –
designed to keep what is corrupt contained
so that it does not taint the rest of us...

But Christ is not to be held by silence –
Christ is the Word that bring light and life to the world.

Christ is not contained by the barriers humans put in the way of truth and justice.

Christ's body bears the scars of the suffering – the torture – and death –
and honours those scars in others.

The stone is rolling away –
but not all are free to leave the tomb... yet.

Prayer

Risen Christ – light of life and flame of justice and truth,
be with your brothers and sisters who are afraid to emerge into the light;
be with your brothers and sisters who have tried to come out
but retreated back in the face of hostility and disbelief;

Be the force that rolls away the stone.
Be the arms that enfold without threat or demand.
Be the Life that leads to new life –
not without its scars –
not without its memories –
but a new life of hope and healing.

Wellsprings