

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH



Heavenly Father,
In every age, you have been our refuge.
Yet again and still, we stand before you
asking for your protection on your holy Church.
For the victims of abuse and their families,
pour out your healing and your peace.
For the Bishops of this country,
continue to inspire their decisions,
and guide them with your Spirit.
For the thousands of good and faithful priests,
who have followed your call to serve you
and your people in holiness,
sustain them by your grace.
For the faithful who are angry, confused,
and searching for answers,
embrace them with your love,
restore their trust,
console them with your clear Gospel message,
and renew them with your sacraments.
We place our Church in your hands,
for without you we can do nothing.
May Jesus, our High Priest and true compass,
continue to lead her in every thought and action –
to be an instrument of justice,
a source of consolation,
a sacrament of unity,
and a manifestation of your faithful covenant.
Grant this through that same Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

*Rita Thiron,
Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions*

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON



Prayer for Atonement and Healing

Individual/Small Group
Prayer/Reflection

POPE FRANCIS ON MOURNING

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”

The world tells us exactly the opposite: entertainment, pleasure, diversion and escape make for the good life. The worldly person ignores problems of sickness or sorrow in the family or all around him; he averts his gaze. The world has no desire to mourn; it would rather disregard painful situations, cover them up or hide them. Much energy is expended on fleeing from situations of suffering in the belief that reality can be concealed. But the cross can never be absent.

A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life’s depths and finding authentic happiness. He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief. They sense that the other is flesh of our flesh, and are not afraid to draw near, even to touch their wounds. They feel compassion for others in such a way that all distance vanishes. In this way they can embrace Saint Paul’s exhortation: “Weep with those who weep” (*Rom 12:15*).

Knowing how to mourn with others: that is holiness.

(Gaudete et Exsultate, § 75-76)



QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION OR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

What specific intention do you hold in your heart today as you enter into an experience of prayer, fasting, penitence?

Which story or verses of Scripture speak to you in prayer today? How do these words console you? How do they challenge you?

Pope Francis said: *A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life’s depths and finding authentic happiness.* What has the cross taught you about how to be with others in pain? What has the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection taught you about finding authentic happiness?

As you choose to stand in solidarity with Catholics throughout the Diocese of Scranton in today’s Prayer for Atonement and Healing, what do you hope for the Church?

What do you think each of us might do to bring this hope into reality? What will you do?



REFLECTION

There are many Scripture passages that express anger at betrayal, some of them in the strongest of terms. For example, Isaiah 24:16–23. Or Hosea 6:7—7:2. Or Jeremiah 12:10–13. Do not shy away from Jesus’ words in Matthew 23, which were always meant more for Christ’s disciples than for the scribes and Pharisees.

Expressing anger and grief are vitally important. Psalm 44:24–27; Psalm 74:1–2; Psalm 85:8–14; Psalm 142:2–8 are a few of the passages that help people move through their anger and toward healing and being present to others. Pray with John 10, Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Talk about what God’s will is for his children, and how easily humans can distort that.

Seek out a quiet space to reflect and pray about all this. A silent vigil to mourn all that has happened and to pray for the victims and their families might help move toward healing and toward joining in the efforts to find solutions.

Pope Francis has said that the whole church needs to face this crisis and move toward solutions. If the people of God, the people in the pew, are really going to take up the call to be involved, it is so important that we begin to feel some greater sense of ownership in the church, and that means, for a start, being able to express our thoughts and feelings and know we are being heard.

We need also to see the representatives of the church, the parish’s leaders, angry and suffering and grieving with us, really listening to us, and inviting us to work together to help find the answers.

This is the best way to open the door for the Spirit so that healing can begin; so that people can keep their faith alive; and so that they will see that the personal and systemic evil in the church so vividly on display in this crisis is not God’s will—and is not all there is to the people of God, who have striven in all ages, in their Spirit-driven but still frail, human way, to bring Jesus’ redeeming life and the kingdom of God to the world.

Through you and your active discipleship, your family and faith community can hold onto hope that change is possible—and to work for it, trusting that God can bring new life out of the worst kinds of death, and believing, as St. Paul put it: “where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more”.

Excerpted from Responding to the Sexual Abuse Crisis, Twenty-Third Publications



PRAYER FOR HEALING FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son to save us
by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust
placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith:
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people’s wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom,
humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and find peace in you.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

FASTING

*While fasting is often a private and personal act, it can also be a communal and public act intended to ask for God's wisdom and guidance in a difficult situation. **With the suffering we have encountered as a Diocese and as a Church with the release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, you and your family might consider participating in a communal fast from Friday, September 14, until Saturday, September 15.***

- Fasting is a radical act of faith, one that entails going without something that is regularly enjoyed. It requires that we move beyond the material to replace it with something spiritual. Thus, in participating in this fast, we should ensure that we are all taking the time, energy, and space to enter into a prayerful place with God.
- We ask you to consider your purpose and plan for your fast in advance. Discuss this opportunity and its meaning with your family, and pray together for guidance along the way.
- Fasting is an act of penance. As a Church, it sometimes seems that there is little we can do to make reparations for the past and offer a solution to a problem that is so deep and painful. In these times, we must call upon God, who alone is the Way. Fasting can help us to move past our own abilities and to seek comfort only from the supernatural.
- Oftentimes, fasting can open up pathways to greater understanding and trust in God. It is also an act of penance and an act of mourning. By taking part in a physical fast, we are sacrificing a gift from God to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering.



LITANY FOR HEALING

(During the Litany candles can be lit)

- Leader: Our response will be:
Save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- For children wounded and tearful;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For children confused or alone;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For children afraid or abandoned;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For children beaten;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For children who sleep in fear;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For children afraid to go home;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For children afraid of their abusers;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For children assaulted and for children who assault;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For children whose innocence has been stolen;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For those who cannot trust;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For those who cannot love;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!
- Leader: For those whose hearts are filled with fear;
ALL: save, heal and protect them, O Lord!

From the Archdiocese of Chicago