



## OFFICE OF PASTORAL SUPPORT AND CHILD PROTECTION

Archdiocese of Boston  
66 Brooks Drive  
Braintree, Massachusetts 02184

March 7, 2022

Dear Pastor and staff,

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the national Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. During that time there have been many lessons learned. Among the most important is the message that we must not let this issue slip into the background and become forgotten. We must continue to help those who have been abused to heal, and we must stay forever vigilant in our efforts to keep all our children safe.

Cardinal Seán O'Malley has set **the weekend of April 2nd and 3rd** as a time for parishes to pray for continued healing of those who have been abused, to pray for all those impacted by abuse, to offer a prayer of thanks for the work of all those who focus on child safety, and to recommit to ongoing practices designed to keep all children free from abuse. The weekend marks the beginning of National Child Abuse Prevention month across the United States and is a good time for all parishes to bring this issue forward.

There are several ways in which our Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal can be noted during Masses that weekend. There are suggestions in the materials that are attached. Please consider using some of the bulletin announcement items, especially the first one directly from a Survivor. All parishes should incorporate healing and child protection into your Masses that weekend.

If you know anyone who was sexually abused by clergy or other church representatives, regardless of when the abuse happened, we want to know so that we can help. You can have them call us at 617-746-5985.

The Office of Pastoral Support and Child Protection is available throughout the year to provide parishes with assistance and outreach, both for prevention efforts and for healing within the parish community. Survivors of clergy abuse, together with pastoral support staff, are available to meet for conversation with parishioners. We are also available to bring a Healing Rosary for victims of abuse to your parish, followed by a discussion if desired.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me at 617-746-5995.

Thank you and your staff for all that you do to be a welcoming presence for those impacted by abuse and to keep all of our children safe.

Vivian Soper, LICSW  
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## **HOMILY SUGGESTIONS for the Mass of Healing & Child Protection— Fifth Sunday of Lent**

This is a difficult topic to address in the context of a homily. For some people, this special Mass intention will bring back painful memories. For some there may be a sense of fatigue concerning this issue following twenty years of it being held up as an inexcusable failure of the Church. Perhaps you feel a sense of weariness towards the issue. However, this is a real crisis with countless real victims of abuse; and this is a Mass concentrating on prayer and healing for them + their loved ones, and for ongoing dedication to prevention work within the Church. With recognition of these challenges it is recommended that homily preparation include time spent praying with the readings for April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The impact of the clergy sexual abuse crisis continues to resonate in the Archdiocese of Boston and the Church throughout the world. For many who were abused by clergy, the harm and the pain are still significant factors in their lives. A survey of Catholics in the Archdiocese in 2017 confirmed that this issue remains a significant concern.

This Mass of Healing and Commitment to Child Protection is a public action of the Church in Boston. We are called to convey the Church's deep sorrow for the harm caused by other priests' crimes and sins against children (and by other church personnel). While the Archdiocese can acknowledge many efforts to as best possible ensure the safety of children, we should not be defensive. The crisis did happen, children's lives and those of family members and friends were devastated. Reparation and healing will be an ongoing work in progress during our lifetimes.

The readings may lead to a reflection on this day of Prayer, Healing and Commitment to Protection. There are those who were abused as minors by priests who think the Archdiocese has forgotten them. We must continue to assure them and all the members of the Church that we have not forgotten them, and that we continue to express our sorrow and pain for the harm they suffered. They need to know that they do not stand alone.

Many of those who have been abused by clergy carry burdens which are a result of their abuse, burdens for which they are not responsible; many carry pain from the abuse that can lead them to depression and despair. Some did not survive the harm done to them and are no longer alive because of it. It is important to remember God can bring light to any darkness and can bring good even from that which is bad. We point to Jesus, who joined the world in suffering, the innocent lamb sacrificed upon the Cross, to show us the way to the light of new life in Christ. As we point to Jesus' healing power we must be able to genuinely express the Church's sorrow with an awareness that there may be people at this or any celebration of Mass who are among those who were harmed and hurt by clergy sexual abuse.

We must also recognize that there are many who no longer join us at the celebration of Mass because of the harm they or their loved ones suffered, and we are called to pray also for their healing and peace.

## **WHEN PLANNING YOUR MASSES, PLEASE KEEP A FEW THINGS IN MIND:**

- Remember that the people in the pews may include victims and their families. When choosing words, prayers and songs keep that in mind and consider how it will be heard by a victim.
- Talk about the sexual abuse “crisis” rather than “scandal”. Scandal sounds like we are worried about the impact on the reputation of the church more than the impact on the victims.
- Don’t forget the victims who did not become survivors. There are many who died from suicide, substance use, and the wear and tear of living with what happened to them.

## **PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL (suggestions)**

Lord, in Your mercy, we seek forgiveness for our sins, for our actions and inactions, that resulted in the harm of children who should have been safe in our care, we pray to the Lord.

For all those who were abused, that they may find safety, healing, and the peace of Jesus Christ, we pray to the Lord.

For those victims who have died, especially those who died through suicide or addiction, unable to cope with the pain, that they may now live in peace with Christ, we pray to the Lord.

For those who are still silent, facing their pain alone, that they may find someone to trust who can hear their story and help them move toward healing, we pray to the Lord.

For those who are traveling the journey of healing, that they may receive help, support, and comfort from those around them and know the love and peace of Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

For those family and friends who share the pain and travel the road with those who were abused, that they too may find peace in Christ, we pray to the Lord.

For Pope Francis, Cardinal Seán, and the world’s Bishops, that they have the wisdom, strength, and courage to lead the Church to be always a safe place for all children and adults, we pray to the Lord.

For those who seek to keep our children safe every day, that we succeed in our efforts and create a world in which all children can thrive, we pray to the Lord.

**POSSIBLE BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS for before the April 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> weekend and during Child Abuse Prevention month:**

1) **(From a Survivor):**

Hi. My name is Kathleen, and I am a survivor of sexual abuse by a priest in the Archdiocese of Boston. This weekend is important to me. It's important for me to let you know that survivors and their families very much want and need your prayers. We are among you and many of us still hurt from the abuse that occurred. However, many of us are also hopeful. I ask you for your prayers this weekend, and to please remember those survivors who are not with us - we miss them and challenge the Church to regain the trust that was broken. We have made a lot of progress with this but our work is not done. We thank you, the clergy and religious in the Church who have supported us. It means everything to us.

- 2) All Masses for Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> (and Saturday evening April 2<sup>nd</sup>) will be offered for Healing for Victims of Abuse and Commitment to Child Protection at the request of Cardinal Seán. It will be an opportunity to pray for all those who were abused, and to pray for continued healing for all those impacted by the abuse including victims, families, members of our church, and the community at large.

So that you can make appropriate decisions for your children, please keep in mind that the topic of the clergy sexual abuse crisis will be addressed during the Mass. If you know of anyone who has stepped away from the church because of the clergy abuse crisis, please let them know about this Mass in case they would like to attend. If you know of anyone who has been sexually abused by clergy or a member of the church, please let them know that the Office of Pastoral Support and Outreach is there to help. To report abuse or get help please call 617-746-5995.

- 3) *Did You Know...* Child abuse can occur in every culture and every socio-economic demographic. Peer reviewed research, especially that of the past 30 years, repeatedly shows this to be true. This same research indicates that the vast majority of child abuse occurs at the hands of someone known to the victim. Those who seek to do harm to children will pursue opportunities that provide access to children and may even ingratiate themselves into the home. You can protect children by respecting the safe environment protocols established at youth serving organizations. More importantly, you can implement many of these protocols in your home and be every observant and vigilant in all public and private settings.

4) *Did you know...*The Catholic Church is deeply committed to protecting children from abuse and holding people accountable for inflicting such pain. In December 2021, the revised Book VI of the Code of Canon Law went into effect. This is the most recent of several documents that specifically address the issue of the abuse of children. Other documents include *Vos estis lux mundi* and *Vademecum*. These documents expand the acts which are considered abusive, clarify the manner in which the cases are processed, and hold people accountable for their action or inaction with regard to processing of a case. Of significant importance is attention given to the care of victim survivors and all who have been harmed. Bishops in the US led the way for these changes with the implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People 20 years ago. Today every diocese and eparchy must have in place systems for tending to those who have been harmed, protecting those in our care and seeking restorative justice.

5) *Did You Know...* What is happening in the Archdiocese to protect children?

- Training is provided for all adults and youth to identify warning signs and develop strategies for maintaining a safe environment for all.
- A designated Victim Assistance Coordinator is available to receive reports and accompany victims through their journey.
- A volunteer independent Review Board assists the Cardinal in the review of cases and makes recommendations for moving forward.
- A Safe Environment Coordinator assists parish and school personnel with training.
- There is a department that does background screenings for anyone who may have access to children.
- An audit is conducted by an independent firm to evaluate implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Findings are incorporated with those of other dioceses and made available in an Annual Report.

## HYMNS:

The below list of possible hymns is not all-inclusive and you should feel free to choose others. Whatever you choose, keep in mind that there may be abuse survivors or their loved ones at Mass. You should think about how the choices may be perceived by them. Please remember to look closely at all verses of the hymns you choose. Avoid references that could be misinterpreted such as Tom Booth's "Here I Am" which includes the line, "Here I am waiting like a lover." Also know that hymns that promise God's protection, such as "Be not Afraid," can be off-putting to those who were abused.

There is a song written by Brother Michael Herry in Australia (A Hymn of Healing for the Church). It may be a good fit for this Mass and can be found at <http://www.maristmusic.org.au/new-albuma-hymn-of-healing-for-the-church>.

### Hymns available through OCP:

Amazing Grace  
Be With Me, Lord – Tom Booth  
From the Depths We Cry to You – Owen Alstott  
Here I am Lord – David Schutte  
Hosea – Western Priory  
Open My Eyes – Jesse Manibusan  
Out of the Depths – Scott Soper  
Prayer of St. Francis  
Save Your People – Jim Farrell  
Seek The Lord – Roc O'Connor, SJ

Signed by Ashes – Kevin Kiel  
There is a Longing – Ann Quigley  
There is a Wideness in God's Mercy -  
Frederick Faber  
Turn to Me – John Foley  
We Are Companions on the Journey -  
Carey Landry  
We Are Many Parts – Marty Haagen  
We Are One Body – John Michael  
Talbot  
You Are the Healing – Scott Soper

**\*\*\* Note: Please remember that prolific Catholic musician David Haas has been accused of sexual misconduct involving adult women alleged to have occurred at Catholic-sponsored events in other states so an advisory was sent out to all parishes in August 2020 in part stating:**

**'Given the seriousness of the allegations, we are advising that parishes, schools and ministries in the Archdiocese of Boston should refrain from using music composed by Mr. Haas until such time as there is a resolution to the allegations against him. We recognize that he is afforded the opportunity to defend himself. However, given the enormous pain and suffering survivors of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct experience, we feel it is appropriate to suspend the use of his music at this time.'**

**Some of his well-known songs include You Are Mine, We Are Called, Blest Are They...**