



ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

SERVICE *of* LAMENT

PRAYER RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION

The Year of Jubilee is a time of mercy, renewal, and reconciliation – a call to set right what has been broken in our relationships with God and one another. Through lament and repentance, we open ourselves to the transforming grace of God, trusting that even from the deepest wounds, new life and hope can emerge. Shaped by this ancient call of the Year of Jubilee, and in response to the profound suffering endured by survivors of abuse within the Church, an inaugural **Service of Lament** will be acknowledged in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

A prayer of lament expresses deep suffering, frustration, or grief from a painful situation, an honest expression to God. Lament is a refusal of silence before God, gathering powerful emotions, and a dialogue that leads to petition and a prayer of faith and hope, not despair. It is a trust that our God is with us always, even in times of darkness, as our strength and hope.

Archbishop Peter A Comensoli and Archdiocesan leaders, clergy and lay, members of the wider Catholic community, and some survivors and their families, will come together for a Service of Lament to acknowledge the past and lament the impacts on children, their families and communities. For this inaugural offering, and as a gesture of understanding, **the Service of Lament will be held on National Survivors Day (12 November 2025) at St Patrick's Cathedral** to acknowledge, remember and mark the fragile emergence of hope.

The Prayer Service of Lament at the Cathedral will primarily be held for survivors and their families to hear this Prayer of Lament from the Church. Parishes have the option to send 1-2 representatives for the service to show their support and acknowledgement of the day.

A PRAYER OF LAMENT IN PARISHES

Parishes may wish to acknowledge this day locally.

Parishes and communities of the Archdiocese of Melbourne are invited to enter an intentional time of prayer from Wednesday 5 November to Wednesday 12 November 2025.

This resource includes prayers of intercession for incorporation into Masses or other prayer gatherings on some or all of the days of the week. They could also be incorporated into an individual's daily prayer in their own time and space.

INTERCESSIONS FOR DAILY PRAYER

As a candle flickers with a glimmer of hope, we acknowledge the deep shadows of pain and the immeasurable loss of childhood that can never be restored. The Psalms of lament — “*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?*” (Psalm 13) — echo through our hearts as we name the wounds of betrayal, grief, and loss. Even in the silence of “*darkness, my only companion*” (Psalm 88), we dare to trust that God hears the cries of His people and holds them in their suffering.

For those whose lives are impacted by the enduring and painful memory of abuse and violence perpetrated in the Church: May their families, friends and supporters renew their trust and security in loving relationships.

Let us pray to the Lord.

For justice and healing for the victims of child sexual abuse by clergy, religious and lay workers. May all members of the Church strive to be instruments of healing.

Let us pray to the Lord.

For wisdom and compassion in our leaders and those who have care for the at risk in our faith community: that they will do all in their power to protect children from any form of abuse. May we all work together to make our churches, schools and families havens of safety and respect for the young and at risk.

Let us pray to the Lord.

For repentance by those who have perpetrated the sins and crimes of abuse in the Church, and for justice and truth to shed light where there is darkness.

Let us pray to the Lord.

For the grace of renewal for all those people whose Christian faith and hope have been bruised by the painful legacy of those who minister in your name which has caused such hurt to the innocent.

Let us pray to the Lord.

For the safety of all young people entrusted to the care of parents, carers, teachers and pastoral workers, and for healing and consolation of all affected by abuse of children and adults.

Let us pray to the Lord.

PRAYERS OF LAMENT AND HEALING

Loving Father, as members of your Church, we are deeply sorry and heartbroken by the depth of trauma inflicted on victims of crimes of emotional, physical, spiritual and sexual abuse in our communities by representatives of our Catholic faith. Lord open our hearts, minds, eyes and ears to the meaning of the ‘Body of Christ’ so that we hear the pain of those who were abused. Teach us to know how to act in genuine solidarity with all victims of abuse, their families and advocates as they strive for justice and healing.

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.

PRAYER: UNITED STATES BISHOPS CONFERENCE

SYMBOLIC RITUAL OF LAMENT – THE TYING OF RIBBONS

As part of the Service of Lament, a ritual action of will take place through the tying of ribbons. Each ribbon represents a prayer – a voice, a story, a loss, a hope – offered before God and held within the hearts of those gathered acknowledging the pain and enduring strength of survivors of abuse. Their colours and movement speak to both grief and resilience: what has been torn and frayed may yet become part of something tender and beautiful in time.

This symbolic ritual is inspired by the beautiful imagery utilised on the National Survivors Day [website](#) with the ribbons floating in the wind.

At the end of the Archdiocesan Service of Lament, the ritual will be initiated by Archbishop Peter A Comensoli with his tying a ribbon onto the central prayer focus (a cluster of decorative branches) – a visible act of repentance and solidarity on behalf of the Church. Following this, survivors and other attendees will be invited to tie their ribbons as they depart from the Service.

The ribbons will remain in temporary placement on the decorative branches during the prayer service and at the conclusion the whole display will be moved into the Cathedral and placed at the foot of the Sanctuary. A week later, all of the ribbons will be carefully gathered and preserved for inclusion in a future artwork of remembrance and hope. Ribbons that have been collected from other Catholic parish church sites, and the Cathedral fences, may be included in this display too.

If your parish or you would like to contribute to this ritual, then please consider providing ribbons to your parish representatives attending the service, or visiting the Cathedral sometime in the week after the service to tie them onto the branches.

No words of apology – while always needed – will ever be enough to right the evil done to those who have been abused, and those who were not listened to and believed. Efforts to repair the harm done – while entirely necessary – cannot overcome the evil perpetrated upon innocent children and vulnerable adults, and the harm experienced by families and communities.

Therefore, and looking ahead, it falls to me, as your Archbishop, to ensure that our local Church in Melbourne is unequivocally committed to attending to the harm done, prioritising the dignity and care of all who are young and vulnerable, rebuilding trust among our people, and creating safe environments in our communities, agencies and organisations. This is the way of Jesus Christ. It must be my way. And I invite you to join with me in making it our common Gospel way.

ARCHBISHOP PETER A COMENSOLI

IN FUTURE

This Service of Lament has been developed not as a single event, but as the beginning of an evolving initiative. A reflective and prayerful day that will continue to grow and be shaped over the years ahead and following the feedback of survivors may look to develop further or shift to another means of acknowledgement. We remain open to continuing to hear from and engage with survivors on the way forward following this inaugural service.

Through lament, we seek not closure but truth; not resolution but remembrance and reverence – so that what was suffered will not be forgotten. Together, we open our hearts to the slow work of healing and the ongoing conversion of the Church and trusting, with the psalmist, that *“the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit”* (Psalm 34:18).