

Bishops' Conference of Scotland  
**DAY OF PRAYER**  
**FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED ABUSE**  
Friday 7 March 2025

The Day of Prayer for Those who have Suffered Abuse is marked each year on the Friday following Ash Wednesday.

This resource has been prepared by the National Liturgical Commission and the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency. We are grateful for the valuable contributions of some survivors of abuse towards the development of this resource.

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**PRAYERS FOR TO BEGIN AND TO CONCLUDE THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

**PRAYER TO BEGIN THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

Lord, we have come to accompany you as you walk the Way of the Cross out of love for us. With us we bring all those who have been abused in any way – sexually or psychologically – by ministers of your church. On this painful journey to Calvary help us to feel their pain as victims and to reach out to them in their need. As we walk with you, Lord, help us to open our ears to their story and our hearts to their suffering. Give us the courage to never deny what they have gone through or minimise their pain. Let us walk together on this path of suffering, which brings healing and wholeness.

Through Christ our Lord.

**PRAYER TO CONCLUDE THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

Lord, we proclaim: “Save us Saviour of the world, for by your cross and resurrection you have set us free!” Help us to live that message of freedom and healing. On our journey to the cross we have brought with us all those who have suffered abuse – in body and in spirit – by the Church. By the power of your cross and resurrection bring healing and courage where there is pain and vulnerability. May all who suffer the wounds of abuse encounter deep understanding and wise accompaniment in their journey towards healing and wholeness. Renew in survivors confidence in a Church which is humble and rooted in upholding the dignity of every person.

Through Christ our Lord.

## FOR INCORPORATION IN THE MASS OF FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

### HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Pilgrims of Hope (Hymn for the Jubilee Year)

<https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/content/dam/iubilaeum2025/inno-giubileo/spartito/Pilgrims-of-Hope.pdf>

and [iubilaeum2025.va/content/dam/iubilaeum2025/inno-giubileo/ENG---Pilgrims-of-Hope---Hymn-for-the-Jubilee-Year-2025-Like-a-Flame-my-Hope-is-Burning.mp3](https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/content/dam/iubilaeum2025/inno-giubileo/ENG---Pilgrims-of-Hope---Hymn-for-the-Jubilee-Year-2025-Like-a-Flame-my-Hope-is-Burning.mp3)

We cannot measure how you heal

Christ be beside me

Christ be our light

Be thou my vision

### INTRODUCTION

Today, the first Friday in Lent, is dedicated here in the Catholic Church in Scotland to remembering and praying for survivors of abuse. We don't always know who they are when we gather as a community to pray. Some no longer feel able to come into Church with us, and their loss is sorely felt. Abuse suffered at the hands of priests and religious was a betrayal of the sanctuary that the Church should be, and the effects of it continue to ripple through our communities. We don't always find these themes comfortable or want to acknowledge them, yet it is our sacred duty and an act of justice to recognise the tragedy of abuse and to humbly pray for healing, reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus, you stand alongside all who are vulnerable and suffering.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you listen to those who cry out to you. Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you heal the wounds of betrayal and hurt. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

### SAFEGUARDING AND THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON SYNODALITY - FINAL DOCUMENT

The Synod of Bishops 2021-24 was unprecedented both in the scope of consultation and discernment as well as in the breadth of delegates participating at the Assemblies. There was circularity in the discernment between various levels over three years: diocesan (parish and other local groups), National, Continental, General Secretariat and the Synod Assembly over two sessions. The Second Session's Final Document – fruit of listening to the People of God and discernment by the Pastors – was ratified and signed by Pope Francis who declared it to form part of ordinary Papal Magisterium. While the document is not normative the Pope expects the conclusions to be implemented in local contexts and bishops are to provide updates during their *ad limina* visits.

*The chapters of the Final Document (see appendix to this resource), endorsed by Pope Francis as forming part of ordinary Magisterium of the Successor of Peter, specifically refer to Safeguarding and the sexual abuse crisis within the Church. They are offered for reflection in the appendix since some ideas may be useful in the context of a homily at Mass today.*

## UNIVERSAL PRAYER

### Presider:

With humility of heart, we pray to God, whose faithfulness reawakens in us hope for the growth of his Kingdom.

### Reader:

For the faithful: may they renew their commitment to the sacraments, to learn the faith, to participate in their parish communities, and to serve the poor and protect the vulnerable.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those who have been abused: may they experience healing from shame, isolation, anger, and despair; may they be listened to with compassion, treated with dignity, and supported in the journey to wholeness.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those who counsel survivors: that their words of wisdom and compassion may be instruments of healing for those they accompany.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For the perpetrators of abuse: that they may experience sincere remorse for their sins, approach God with sorrow, and be prepared to make reparation for the damage they have caused.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For those members of the clergy who, through no fault of their own, have inherited the abuse crisis with all its horrible complexities: may they be strengthened to encounter those who are vulnerable with firm hope in the healing power of the Cross and Resurrection. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For all parents: that they may foster family life rooted in love, prayer, faith, and mercy.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For young people discerning a religious vocation to priesthood or consecrated life: that the tragic failures of some may not blind them to the heroic virtue of many.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

### Presider:

May these prayers rise in your presence like incense O Lord,  
as a humble symbol of our sorrow and contrition.

May the grace of the Jubilee Year reawaken in us *Pilgrims of Hope*,  
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**JUBILEE PRAYER** (*for use before the final blessing*)

Father in heaven,  
may the *faith* you have given us  
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,  
and the flame of *charity* enkindled  
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,  
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*  
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us  
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.  
May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos  
in the sure expectation  
of a new heaven and a new earth,  
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,  
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee  
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,  
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.  
May that same grace spread  
the joy and peace of our Redeemer  
throughout the earth.  
To you our God, eternally blessed,  
be glory and praise for ever.  
Amen.

**SOME OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES**

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/day-of-prayer-for-survivors-of-abuse/>

A Rosary for Healing and Protection:

<https://adw.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/09/Healing-Rosary-and-Prayers.pdf>

## APPENDIX: SAFEGUARDING AND THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON SYNODALITY

### SAFEGUARDING IN THE FINAL DOCUMENT

*The following paragraphs from the Final Document, endorsed by Pope Francis as forming part of ordinary Magisterium of the Successor of Peter, specifically refer to Safeguarding and the sexual abuse crisis within the Church.*

#43 The need within the Church for healing, reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust has resounded at every stage of the synodal process, particularly in light of so many scandals related to different types of abuse. It also resounded in the face of similar abuses in society. The Church is called to put at the centre of its life and action the fact that in Christ, through Baptism, we are entrusted to each other. Recognition of this profound reality becomes a sacred duty that enables us to recognise mistakes and rebuild trust. There is a missionary obligation upon the People of God to walk this path in our world and we need to invoke the gift to do so from above. Walking this path is also an act of justice. The desire to do so is the fruit of synodal renewal.

#55 Many of the evils that afflict our world are also visible in the Church. The abuse crisis, in its various and tragic manifestations, has brought untold and often ongoing suffering to victims and survivors, and to their communities. The Church needs to listen with special attention and sensitivity to the voices of victims and survivors of sexual, spiritual, economic, power and conscience abuse by members of the clergy or persons with Church appointments. Listening is a fundamental element of the path to healing, repentance, justice and reconciliation. At a time characterised by a global crisis of trust, which encourages people to live in distrust and suspicion, the Church must acknowledge its own shortcomings. It must humbly ask for forgiveness, must care for victims, provide for preventative measures, and strive in the Lord to rebuild mutual trust.

#61 Within the Christian community, special attention should be given to children. Not only do children need accompaniment in their growth, but they have much to give to the community of believers. When the apostles argue among themselves about who is the greatest, Jesus puts a child at the centre, presenting the child as a criterion for entering the Kingdom (cf. Mk 9:33-37). The Church cannot be synodal without the contribution of children, who are bearers of missionary potential, being valued. The voice of the child is needed by the community. We must listen to children and make efforts to ensure that everyone in society listens to them, especially those who have political and educational responsibilities. A society that is not able to welcome and care for children is a sickly society. The suffering experienced by many children due to war, poverty and abandonment, abuse and trafficking is a scandal that calls both for the courage to denounce their suffering and for a serious commitment to solidarity.

#74 Frequently, during the synodal process, the Bishops, priests and deacons were thanked for the joy, commitment and dedication with which they carry out their service. Often mentioned, in addition, were the very real difficulties encountered by pastors in their ministry. These mainly concerned a sense of isolation and loneliness, as well as the feeling of being overwhelmed by the expectation that they are required to fulfil every need. The experience of the Synod can be a response to this reality, helping Bishops, priests and deacons to rediscover co-responsibility in the exercise of ministry, which includes collaboration with other members of the People of God. A wider distribution of tasks and responsibilities and a more courageous discernment of what properly belongs to the ordained ministry and what can and must be delegated to others will enable each ministry to be exercised in a more spiritually sound and pastorally dynamic manner. This

perspective will surely have an impact on decision-making processes, enabling them to have a more clearly synodal character. It will also help to overcome clericalism, understood as the use of power to one's own advantage and the distortion of the authority of the Church that is at the service of the People of God. This expresses itself above all in forms of abuse, be they sexual or economic, the abuse of conscience and of power, by ministers of the Church. "Clericalism, whether fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today" (Francis, *Letter to the People of God*, 20 August 2018).

#97 The attitude to transparency we have just outlined safeguards the trust and credibility needed by a synodal Church that is attentive to relationships. When this trust is violated, the weakest and the most vulnerable suffer the most. Wherever the Church enjoys trust, the practice of transparency, accountability, and evaluation helps to strengthen its credibility. These practices are even more critical where the Church's credibility needs rebuilding. They are particularly important in regard to the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults.

#98 These practices contribute to keeping the Church faithful to its mission. The absence of these practices is one of the consequences of clericalism, which is thus fuelled. Clericalism is based on the implicit assumption that those who have authority in the Church are not to be held to account for their actions and decisions as if they were isolated from or above the rest of the People of God. Transparency and accountability should not only be invoked when it comes to sexual, financial and other forms of abuse. These practices also concern the lifestyle of pastors, pastoral planning, methods of evangelisation, and the way in which the Church respects human dignity, for example, in regard to the working conditions within its institutions.

#102 It seems necessary to ensure, at the very least, the establishment everywhere of the following in forms appropriate to different contexts:

- a) effective functioning of finance councils;
- b) effective involvement of the People of God, in particular of the more competent members, in pastoral and financial planning;
- c) preparation and publication (appropriate to the local context and in an accessible form) of an annual financial report, insofar as possible externally audited, demonstrating the transparency of how the temporal goods and financial resources of the Church and its institutions are being managed;
- d) the preparation and publication of an annual report on the carrying out of the local Church's mission, including also safeguarding initiatives (the protection of minors and vulnerable adults), and progress made in promoting the laity's access to positions of authority and to decision-making processes, specifying the proportion of men and women;
- e) periodic evaluations of all the ministries and roles within the Church.

#104 The Assembly proposes that the diocesan Synod and eparchial Assembly be more highly valued as bodies for regular consultation between the Bishop and the portion of the People of God entrusted to him. This should be the place for listening, prayer and discernment, particularly when it comes to choices pertaining to the life and mission of a local Church. Moreover, the diocesan Synod may provide scope for the exercise of accountability and evaluation whereby the Bishop gives an account of pastoral activity in various areas: the implementation of a diocesan pastoral plan, reception of the synodal processes of the entire Church, initiatives in safeguarding and the administration of finances and temporal goods. It is, therefore, necessary to strengthen the existing canonical provisions in order to better reflect the missionary synodal character of each local Church, making provision that these bodies meet on a regular, and not rare or infrequent, basis.

#150 Another area of great importance is the promotion in all ecclesial contexts of a culture of safeguarding, making communities ever safer places for minors and vulnerable persons. The work to equip Church structures with regulations and legal procedures that enable the prevention of abuse and timely responses to inappropriate behaviour has already begun. It is necessary to continue this commitment, offering ongoing specific and adequate formation to those who work in contact with minors and vulnerable adults so that they can act competently and recognise the signals, often silent, of those experiencing difficulties and needing help. It is essential that victims are welcomed and supported, and this needs to be done sensitively. This requires great humanity and must be carried out with the help of qualified people. We must all allow ourselves to be moved by their suffering and practise that proximity, which, through concrete choices, will uplift them, help them and prepare a different future for all. Safeguarding processes must be constantly monitored and evaluated. Victims and survivors must be welcomed and supported with great sensitivity.

#154 Living through the synodal process, we have renewed our awareness that the salvation to be received and proclaimed is inherently relational. We live it and witness to it together. History reveals itself to us tragically marked by war, rivalry for power and thousands of injustices and abuses. We know, however, that the Spirit has placed the desire for authentic relationships and true bonds in the heart of every human being.