

A Prayer resource to respond to the Mother and Baby homes in Ireland.

The recent report on Mother and Baby homes commission report highlighted the horrendous treatment of vulnerable women and children throughout the 20th century and even in recent months. This was a failure on the State, the Church and society and an atrocious abuse of power. We believe that God's heart is broken at what was often done in His name and now is not the time to remain silent in the Church but to both respond practically (please see resources at the end) and in prayer.

Sometimes it is hard to know how to pray. This is a liturgy of lament for the broken body of Christ, in which all members of the body of Christ can name their feelings anger, disillusionment, sadness, confusion in a faith filled context with the hope of an encounter with the transformative Spirit of God. The focus is on the actual victims and survivors of the Mother and Baby home, but at the same time be expansive enough to include others. The resources include Lament, Silence, Confession, Intercession, Reflection on repentance, and a closing commitment.

We recognise that this is potentially painful and difficult for those who might be present who have been impacted by this and other abuses - we recommend that you have someone present who is a counsellor and information to provide to all participants in case they need further support.

Many of the prayers and liturgy below have been taken from or amended from - "Liturgy of Lament for the Broken Body of Christ" - visit www.futurechurch.org

Call to Worship

In the name of the Father,
We have come here tonight from many places,
From east and west, north and south,
From pain and disillusionment,
From anger and confusion,
From sadness looking for hope.
We come together for one thing only:
To raise our hearts and voices and very bodies to God, In the hope that the very act of raising them in lament yet in faith,
They may be touched in their brokenness
And know the transforming and surpassing power of God's love.

Romans 8:22-27

Lament -

"How long, O LORD? Will you forget [us] forever?
How long will you hide your face from [us]?"

How long must [we] wrestle with [our] thoughts
and every day have sorrow in [our] hearts?
How long will [our] enemy triumph over [us]?
Look on [us] and answer, O LORD [our] God.
Give light to [our] eyes, or [we] will sleep in death;
[Our] enemy will say, "I have overcome [them],"
and [our] foes will rejoice when [we] fall.
But [we] trust in your unfailing love;
[our] hearts rejoice in your salvation.
[We] will sing to the LORD,
for he has been good to [us]."
(Psalm 13:1-6)

"You showed favour to your land, O LORD;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins.
You set aside all your wrath
and turned from your fierce anger.
Restore us again, O God our Saviour,
and put away your displeasure toward us.
Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your unfailing love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.
[We pray that]
Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven."

(Psalm 85:1-7,10-11)

Prayer of Lament (Read in bold together)

O God hear us as we cry out to you. The pain is more than we can bear alone.

Unable to forget the violation done to the innocent and the vulnerable, we cry - **Lord have mercy**

Still bearing the marks of their wounds, we cry - **Christ have mercy**

Struggling to overcome their trauma and fears, we cry - **Spirit have mercy**

Mourning the loss of their innocence, we cry - **Lord have mercy**

Not knowing where to turn in pain and isolation, we cry - **Christ have mercy**

Wondering how your grace permitted this, we cry - **Spirit have mercy**

Bowed down by the weakness of human frailty, we cry - **Lord have mercy**

Longing for families who can bear the truths with them, we cry - **Christ have mercy**

Looking for justice where none seems possible, we cry - **Spirit have mercy**

Searching for the kind of faith that once sustained us all, we cry - **Lord have mercy**

Covered in shame and confusion, wanting to stand safe and secure again, we cry - **Christ have mercy**

Hoping for kindness and truth to meet, justice and peace to kiss, we cry - **Spirit have mercy**

Desperate for the courage to face our own demons, we cry - **Lord have mercy**

Asking for your healing and for restoration and wholeness, we cry - **Christ have mercy**

Outraged by the actions of those who should have known better, we cry - **Spirit have mercy**

Bearing with one another the burdens of our own and not of our own making, we cry - **Lord have mercy**

Lost, looking for your guidance and direction, we cry - **Christ have mercy**

Amidst the shattered images of godliness and ministry, we cry - **Spirit have mercy**

Out of darkness of our despair, we cry - **Lord have mercy**

Into the cloud of not fully knowing or being able to grasp the extent of the pain suffered, we cry to you who knows it all - **Christ have mercy**

Not even knowing how to help or where to go from here, we cry - **Spirit have mercy ***

SILENCE

Worship song of lament - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iN5xCG2qQw>

Confession

Our majestic, sovereign, empathetic, beautiful Father in heaven, we repent of how we have failed to love those who struggle in our midst, and we recognise your holy rumblings in the midst of the mother and baby home crisis.

We have not always wept with those who weep. We have not always crossed the street with the Good Samaritan, inconveniencing ourselves for those who bleed. We have sometimes preferred our institutions and systems to the cries of the wounded in our midst.

We have failed to acknowledge the very real grief and trauma of survivors, abandoning them to feel alone, bereft, and untouchable. Sometimes we have blamed them for their neediness, or we've simply dismissed their stories, preferring our own narratives because it is more convenient to do so.

We have not rightly understood the nature of wolves in our midst, and there have been times when we jumped to believe their howls of innocence over the cries of those they've devoured.

Through our ignorance, we have further marginalised image bearers of God who have difficult stories of abuse (often at the hands of members and leaders of the church) by shaming, silencing, and blaming them.

We have looked the other way.

We have not acted justly, loved mercy, or walked humbly with You, O Lord.

Forgive us for preferring corporate reputation to the outcries of survivors.

Forgive us for not valuing our children enough to protect them.

Forgive us for failing to see the worldwide Body of Christ as valuable enough to protect it from the perpetrators we have sent their way, so it's no longer our problem, but theirs.

We repent.

We turn away from these sins of commission and omission, asking for your forgiveness and restoration. Transform our congregations into havens. As the church, we long to be a city on the hill, a beacon of light to the broken. We understand that the level to which we redemptively and empathetically respond to this crisis corresponds directly to our effectiveness in representing Jesus Christ on this earth.

Lord, give us a prophetic imagination to see the wounded as tutors in the winsome ways of your kingdom.

Instead of indifference, we choose tangible compassion. Instead of deafness, we choose to dignify people by listening to and highlighting their stories. Instead of knee-jerk reactions, we choose Holy Spirit-inspired wisdom and patience. Give us tenacious grit to love this way.

Restore unto us the joy of our very real salvation. Reorient our hearts to the Gospel of the upside down kingdom, where the last are first, the small are great, and the broken are restored.

We long to see revival, and we know that a move of God follows Godly sorrow and repentance. Have mercy upon us as we lament and repent, dear Lord. In Jesus' Name I pray.

Amen.

Sign of the Cross

On the wood of the cross Jesus Christ bore our infirmities and took upon himself the consequences of all our sinfulness. In the wood of the cross we find solidarity with our own suffering and broken bodies. Through the wood of the cross we too are lifted up and raised to the glory of God.

Sign of our suffering.

Sign of our salvation.

The very shape of our world.

the sign of the cross on your forehead

Put on the mind of Christ,

from the folly of whose cross God's wisdom was manifest.

the sign of the cross on your ears,

that in the cries of the abused and betrayed you may hear the voice of the Lord.

the sign of the cross on your eyes,

darkened by tears, denials and coverups, that they may be brightened in the light of Christ.

the sign of the cross on your lips,

silenced by fear and the shock of scandal, that you may respond to the word of God and speak justice and truth in love.

the sign of the cross over your heart,

broken in pain and uncertainty, disillusionment and disappointment, that Christ may dwell there by faith.

the sign of the cross on your shoulders,

weighted and scarred with sadness and sorrow, that your burden be eased in the gentle yoke of Christ.

the sign of the cross on your hands,

wrung in anger and agony, that Christ may be known in the work which you do.

the sign of the cross on your feet,

that you may stand firm in faith and hope, and walk in the way of Christ.

Still bearing the marks of his betrayal and the wounds of his cross, the risen Christ reached out his hands to his disciples and offered them peace which the world could not give.

Spirit of truth,

Spirit of healing,

Spirit of reconciliation,

Intercession

Interceding for ourselves

Lord we pray that as your people we would seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly with you, our God.

Lord, hear our prayer

Interceding for victims

Lord for all those who, women and children, suffered abuse in Mother and Baby homes, we pray for a pouring out of your grace in their lives that would lead to healing.

Lord, hear our prayer

Interceding for the process from here

Lord we pray for a way forward that prioritises the victims, that their stories and voices would be genuinely listened to and heard. **Lord, hear our prayer**

Interceding for those with responsibilities

Lord we pray for the State and the Church that there would be full admission of all wrong which would lead to changed hearts and practical and material responses made that would bring justice to those who have suffered.

Lord, hear our prayer

Interceding for Irish society

Lord we pray that the Report would not be the end but the beginning of a process towards repentance and justice in our land.

Lord, hear our prayer

Interceding for forgiveness

“And forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are in debt to us” (Matthew 6:12). Lord we pray that in dealing with the report that you would lead us all on the pathway to forgiveness.

Lord, hear our prayer

Repentance

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says:

“In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength,
but you would have none of it.” (Isaiah 30:15)

Through His prophet Amos God calls His people to repent, “Seek the Lord and live.” Repentance involves justice, “Seek good and not evil, that you may live” (Amos 5:4, 14). It involves freely admitting both what we did wrong and why we did wrong. Repentance is more than saying sorry. It involves a clear commitment to not just act differently but to be different.

Lord, hear our prayer

The Lord's prayer -

As we leave this gathering we commit to continuing on this journey with you:

- **We commit to remembering the past so that we might not have to travel that road again**
- **We commit to prayer so that we might live with you**
- **We commit to seeking justice for the past**
- **We commit to pursuing justice in the future for all in our nation who have suffered.**

Some notes for further action-

- Source some contacts for local counselling professionals and make this available to all participants.
- The report - can be read here (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d693a-report-of-the-confidential-committee-to-the-commission-of-investigation-into-mother-and-baby-homes-october-2020/>) while it is not easy reading it is an important step in listening to the voices of those who suffered.
- If you would like to write to your local TDs and Church leaders to ask for accountability, further action and redress - please do so or contact us as Praxis and we can provide you with a template.