**A Prayer Service of Lamentation**

**for the Broken Body of Christ**

August 26, 2018, St. Margaret Mary Parish, Naperville, IL

Introduction: [Tom Cordaro]

I want to thank everyone for coming out on a Sunday evening to pray with us as we begin a process of responding to the sex abuse crimes committed by Church leaders in Pennsylvania; across the country; and around the world.

This prayer service is grounded in the spiritual tradition of lamentation. This is not a word that is often used in Church or Society so before we begin our service I want to share some thoughts on the lamentation tradition written by Fr. Bryan Massingale in his book about racism in the Catholic Church.

**“Laments are cries of anguish and outrage, groans of deep pain and grief, utterances of profound protest and righteous indignation over injustice, wails of mourning and sorrow in the face of unbearable suffering. … It expresses the reality and pain of evil and suffering, and yet is more than mere mourning or catharsis.**

**The act of lamenting overcomes psychic numbness and stunned silence in the face of evil. Its wails, cries, and pleas tear asunder the veil of complacency and the shroud of immobilizing fear. Lament facilitates the emergence of something new, whether a changed consciousness or a renewed engagement with outer events. It is indeed a paradox of protest and praise that leads to new life.”**

Opening Song: “Psalm 91: Be With Me Lord” #50

Scripture Reading: [Josephine Lewis]

A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

As the body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, “Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,” it does not for that reason belong any less to the body. [And] If one part of the body suffers, all the parts suffer with it.”

The Word of the Lord.

An Excerpt from the Letter to the People of God, by Pope Francis [Barb Ryan]

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” These words of Saint Paul forcefully echo in my heart as I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons. Crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike.

Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults….

The extent and the gravity of all that has happened requires coming to grips with this reality in a comprehensive and communal way. While it is important and necessary on every journey of conversion to acknowledge the truth of what has happened, in itself this is not enough. Today we are challenged as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit. If, in the past, the response was one of omission, today we want solidarity, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history. … Saint Paul’s exhortation to suffer with those who suffer is the best antidote against all our attempts to repeat the words of Cain: “Am I my brother's keeper?”

Stories of Survivors of Sexual Abuse by Church Leaders

**[Christy Carter]** At this prayer service we will not gloss over the painful stories of sexual abuse by Church leaders. Listening to these stories may make us uncomfortable, but without listening there can be no solidarity.

*[These stories may not be appropriate for younger children. If you wish to take your children into the lobby for this part of the service do so now.]*

**Story One. [Christy Carter]**

A Catholic priest sexually and physically molested me decades ago. The names and place where it occurred are insignificant. I live in the Midwest. I remember the incident vividly. …

After my assault I was dumbfounded about what to do. I was a teenager, and I was scared and alone. My parents trusted me with my perpetrator. Who were they going to believe? He was a priest and I was just a kid. I should have told them and they would have helped me. That is one of my biggest regrets. I can't forgive myself for not telling them. However, this is most often the case in these situations. It became my secret.

It started by my perpetrator grooming me for the big night. This went on for a period of months. He took me out to dinner and ordered alcohol for me. I thought that was strange because I was under age. However, I began to drink with him. It turned into using illegal drugs also while drinking when we were alone. It went on for a period of time. He showed me some pornography. The night of the abuse I was drunk and high and very vulnerable and accessible to him. I was just a kid. …

I lost my innocence that night. I did not even know it was possible for a man, let alone a priest to do that to a young boy. There is nothing more innocent than a child. He had led me down this path by gaining my trust. I felt violated ever since. …

I have been told by friends and family to get over it. Why don't you forget that it ever happened? It is just something I can't seem to get over. People have minimized it. They say, it only happened once or at least this or that did not happen. I have only told a handful of people. Most are compassionate and understanding. However, some don't understand the complexities or the consequences that abuse victims endure through their life due to the abuse. I feel betrayed when I trust someone with the story of the incident and they minimize it. Therefore, I don't talk about it except with a few people I can trust.

*[Pause for one minute of silent reflection.]*

**Song Response: [Tom Cordaro]**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Oh, oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Story Two: [Steve Jackson]**

Jim VanSickle told the Washington Post he was 16 in 1979 when he met a young priest named David Poulson, his English teacher at Bradford Central Christian High School.

“I was a lost kid,” said VanSickle, who is now 55.

His grandmother had just died and his father was sick and couldn’t work. So he found a mentor in Poulson, who was 26 at the time.

The recently ordained priest made VanSickle captain of the chess team, which traveled from their town in northern Pennsylvania to New York for competitions, and encouraged him to finish high school and go to college.

“He turned my life around,” VanSickle said. “He was my spiritual leader. He was my friend.”

But things turned dark, as Poulson exploited their friendship and “groomed” VanSickle, abusing him emotionally and physically. It started with Poulson putting his hand on the teen’s leg in the car or trying to tickle him in the rectory, VanSickle recalled.

Still, “I looked at the guy — he’s a priest. I trusted him,” he said.

Soon tickling turned to wrestling and groping in the rectory or in front of the altar, he said.

“He constantly wanted physical contact,” VanSickle told the outlet.

Just before high school graduation, the pair went on a trip to an Our Lady of Fatima shrine in Ohio. In a rundown hotel, VanSickle said, “he jumps me, and I realize that he was aroused in his clothing.”

“He attacked me at that point and for the first time, I felt terror and fear from the fact that it almost seemed like he had eight or nine arms versus the two that I’m using to get him off,” he said.

VanSickle said he was able to fight the priest off — and from that point on, his memory went blank until they were in the car on the way home.

“He never apologized and we never discussed it.”

It took VanSickle a year to tell his father what happened and 10 years to tell his mother — as he watched Poulson move from parish to parish in Pennsylvania.

Now a tutor and life coach in Pittsburgh, VanSickle said it has taken years for him to deal with the abuse. He’s been in therapy for the last four years with his wife of 33 years.

“The only two real feelings I had were anger or fear, and both of those caused me to be violent,” he said.

*[Pause for one minute of silent reflection.]*

**Song Response: [Tom Cordaro]**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Oh, oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Story Three [Barb Burkhardt]**

Carol DuPré is one of a group of accusers who say they were sexually abused by Rochester area priests when they were children. DuPré said she was molested by Father G. Stuart Hogan when she was 15 and 16 years old in 1962 and 1963.

"It started after mass one Sunday when he asked me to go back to the rectory to help count the offering," she said. "It put me in a precarious position where he began the molestation, and that's all I want to talk about as far as details."

"The parish priest always made some sort of physical connection with me every week that began with innocent and gentle touches and culminated in sloppy, wet kisses. He was more than four times my age. What happened in that nicely furnished parlor never made its way to the surface of my thoughts until years later, when Catholic priests and all their dirty, little deeds were the headlines of every newspaper in America. "

DuPré, who is now 71, said the abuse traumatized her, and her efforts to report it went nowhere.

"I was an innocent kid, and when I finally had the nerve to tell my mother she was shocked," DuPré said.

She said her mother wrote letters and called the Diocese but was ignored.

A few years ago, DuPré said, a friend of hers told her she had also been molested by Father Hogan during the same time period. She said she contacted the Diocese shortly thereafter and was told there was no record of any complaints made against Hogan.

DuPré, said the abuse had a huge effect on her life. "It really messed up my image of who God is on the Earth. We were told that Catholic priests were like God in the flesh," she said. "I have struggled my whole life to identify with a good and loving God. By coming out and talking about this i hope it will help with the healing."

*[Pause for one minute of silent reflection.]*

**Song Response: [Tom Cordaro]**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Oh, oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.**

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**Prayers of the Faithful [Karen Jackson]**

As we struggle with the immensity of the scandal of sexual abuse, we pray…

For those who have suffered abuse: May they be uplifted by our support, concern, and advocacy on their behalf, and experience healing and protection, let us pray to the Lord.

**Sung Response: Be with us Lord, when we are in trouble, be with us Lord we pray.**

For the Spirit of Truth to empower us to voice our outrage, express our alarm, and turn our energies toward a better future, let us pray to the Lord.

**Sung Response: Be with us Lord, when we are in trouble, be with us Lord we pray.**

For the grace and honesty to convey our anger to Church leaders, and to recognize and demand that God’s quest for justice also be carried out within the Church, let us pray to the Lord.

**Sung Response: Be with us Lord, when we are in trouble, be with us Lord we pray.**

For wisdom, compassion and open hearts as Church leaders grapple with next steps, let us pray to the Lord.

**Sung Response: Be with us Lord, when we are in trouble, be with us Lord we pray.**

For those who have abused people and power. For, for those in authority who did not protect those under their watch: May they be healed and repent, let us pray to the Lord.

**Sung Response: Be with us Lord, when we are in trouble, be with us Lord we pray.**

For the reform of Church systems and structures that perpetuate the corrupt use of power or authority, so that the Church can more faithfully reveal God-among-us, let us pray to the Lord.

**Sung Response: Be with us Lord, when we are in trouble, be with us Lord we pray.**

Commissioning: The Signing of the Senses **[Tom Cordaro]**

Our closing commissioning rite reminds us that our lamentation is meant to lead us to action. After each commissioning prayer is read, turn to the persons near to you and make the sign of the cross on each other as instructed.

***Receive the sign of the cross on your forehead;***

that you might put on the mind of Christ and not be dissuaded from following your conscience.

***Receive the sign of the cross on your ears;***

that you might always hear the cries of the abused and betrayed.

***Receive the sign of the cross over your eyes;***

that you may never turn a blind eye to evil deeds done in secret

and that you may bring the light of Christ into the darkness of denials and cover ups.

***Receive the sign of the cross on your lips;***

that you will never be silenced by fear and the shock of scandal,

and that you may respond to the word of God and speak justice and truth in love.

***Receive the sign of the cross over your heart;***

that you may remain open to the those who are broken, who are in pain,

who are disillusioned and feel betrayed.

***Receive the sign of the cross on your shoulders,***

that you may find the strength to carry the weight

of those scarred by violence and betrayal.

***Receive the sign of the cross on your hands;***

that you will never accept the lie that you have no power and there is nothing you can do.

***Receive the sign of the cross on your feet,***

that you may stand firm in faith and hope,

and that you will walk in love with all those who suffer.

**The Lord be with you.**

And with your spirit.

**Go now in peace to love and serve God and one another.**

Thanks be it to God.

**Closing Song: There is a Balm in Gilead #617**

*[For those who wish to share their thoughts and feelings on these issues with others; some of us will be available to listen at the end of this service.]*