

Paschal Candle

praying for victims & survivors of abuse

Choose to do one or more of the 5 (30m) sessions, or two (60m) sessions for sharing in small groups, parishes, homes, and places of formation

Aim of the resource

- To deepen awareness that victims and survivors are part of our family, God's family. Nothing we do as a family is just about 'me' or 'you'; it is about 'us,' and who we are in Christ. When those among us are wounded and hurting, and especially when some of our most trusted members have inflicted these life-scarring wounds, we are all affected. (1Cor12.26)
- We come to repent and lament what has happened. Victims have suffered deeply as a result of our failures as Church to believe them and protect them. We pray for their families who also feel betrayed. We pray for affected parish communities and the wider church
- We come to offer heartfelt sorrow and to pray for steps towards healing for all victims of abuse and sexual abuse
- We come to reflect on, better understand and lament the wounds of abuse, through exploring the symbols of the Paschal Candle (use all, or choose one or more of the symbols)
 - To reflect on the mystery of Christ's life, suffering, death and resurrection symbolised or embodied in the Paschal Candle, and to find ourselves, victims, survivors, families, communities, the whole church, on that same journey of Jesus Christ, through suffering and death, rising to new life. Christ is with us always; guiding, inspiring, offering hope, leading out of darkness into light. The Risen Christ is a wounded body, with visible 'touchable' scars.

Suggestions for a focal point

for centre of a table: cloth, bible, baptismal candle(s) if you have them; take and use a photo image of your own parish Paschal candle; or in parish setting, gather round the actual paschal candle; a lit candle and enough T-lights one for each person.

Outline

- Gather/seated round focal point with Paschal Candle/or image of Paschal Candle.
- Welcome, invitation to enter a prayerful conversation/dialogue.
- Reflecting on the symbols of the Paschal Candle (in order 'Preparation of the Candle' at Easter Vigil) Choose one, more or all symbols.
- Reflect on own experience – what do you see? What do you think or feel? Share.
- Listen to the Voice of survivor. (1)
- Response to what we have heard: a lament, the Voice of God in scripture.
- Voice of Survivor. (2)
- Response: Life-giving scripture and Prayer of Trust.
- Silent pause, and move on to next symbol. End of session: Closing prayer together.

Prepared by the *Isaiah Journey* Working Group of the Bishops' Conference © 2022 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales.
www.cbcew.org.uk/prayer-for-survivors-of-abuse-2022

Leader Guide

These notes are offered in support of a leader in gathering and inviting a group to enter conversations together, centred round the Paschal Candle

Opening prayer

Leader's own choice, or the following, adapted from 'for a spiritual or pastoral gathering' (Roman Missal 1348)

O God,
your Son Jesus promised to all those gathered in his name
that he would be there in their midst,
grant we pray that we may be aware of his presence among us.
Pour out on us, O Lord we pray,
a spirit of truth, understanding and peace,
that we may know with all our hearts what is pleasing to you,
and with your grace,
that we may live out what we have come to know.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son who lives and reigns with you
in unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Introduction

In this session we are praying for and with victims and survivors of abuse, their families, and communities, and the wider church in the light of the Paschal Candle

- We are a family, a community of God's family, the Church, often referred to as 'The Body of Christ', made up of many members, each person precious and gifted is part of the whole. And when just one person, one member of the Body – child or adult – suffers, everyone is affected, and everyone is responsible for helping the healing. (1 Cor12:26)
- Looking closely at the image/picture or actual Paschal Candle
- What do you see? What do you notice? (see Easter Vigil Liturgy, Roman Missal 379)
 - 'Paschal' – its meaning and use to describe the Candle, linked to Paschal Mystery at the heart of our faith: the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - At the beginning of the Easter Vigil: a fire is lit outside the Church. It is blessed.
- Fire — Scriptures: e.g. in scripture, OT often a sign of God's presence. NT Jesus says: I have come to bring fire to the earth; you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire
 - The Paschal candle is the first candle to be lit with a flame from the sacred fire of Easter night.
- The Paschal Candle is then brought in procession into the dark church, the darkness of our world - the candle light representing the light of Christ, light for the world, overcoming and pushing out, darkness and 'death' – that includes everything that stops us loving and living life to the full. We in our turn as followers of Jesus are called by him to be light for the world.

Session Content for Reflecting on the Symbols of the Paschal Candle

5 sessions offered, in the order of 'Preparation of the Candle' at the Easter Vigil. Choose one or more sessions using the same process for each. As a guide, allow about 30m per session

1. The Cross

Description: The paschal candle is first marked with the sign of the Cross.

- The priest cuts a vertical line down
 - God in closest possible touch with us and we are in touch with God (John 3: 16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.)
- And then the priest cuts a horizontal line across
 - The Son is embracing us and the world in His love, in our daily lives (Matthew 28:20 And behold I am with you always to the end of the age; Matthew 11.28 Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.)
- Vertical and horizontal lines of the cross symbolising the Paschal Mystery – the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our experience

First thoughts: can you see the cross markings? What might the vertical/horizontal markings represent or be saying to you? I wonder, where do you find or experience the ‘cross’ in your lives?

What about people who are hurting? Today we are thinking especially about people who have been hurt, abused themselves, or are deeply affected by abuse in the church. We now listen to a Survivor of abuse in the Church:

Voice of Survivor (1)

reflecting on the impact in the aftermath of sustained sexual abuse by trusted members of the Catholic Church and how the Church responded

I would like to speak about myself as a Catholic. For a Catholic, the most difficult thing is to be able to speak about sexual abuse. But once you have taken courage and start telling, the first thing I thought was “I am going to tell everything to Mother Church, where they will listen to me, and respect me. The first thing they did was to treat me as a liar, turn their backs and tell me that I and others were enemies of the Church.

Our Response

turning to the voice of God in Scripture – a voice deeper than all the other voices we listen to, our loving God who knows us by name and helps us when we don’t know what we can say or do. (Adapted from Psalm 50 and 54)

We lament the harm inflicted by abuse

We pray as People of God, the Church for our victims and survivors of abuse (pause)

Our offences truly we know them, our sin is always before us

The victims’ stories were not believed.

We told some to take money for therapy, but they must remain silent forever.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Against God we have sinned

What is evil in God’s sight we have done

When apologies and care were desperately needed, scandals were managed

We are dismayed. We are angry. We are deeply saddened.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Our hearts are stricken within us,

Trembling and fear fall upon us, Horror overwhelms us

We have put the institution before the victims.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

If this abuse had been done by an enemy

We could bear their taunts;

If a rival had risen again us, we could hide from him.

But it is those among us who have so betrayed the trusting little ones

Our own companions, friends

Our hearts are broken for our brothers and sisters who are victims and survivors

We feel the guilt and shame of the whole church

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We will cry out to God for mercy.

We will cry and lament.

What can we say? What can we do?

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Voice of Survivor (2)

To take a step towards healing from the wounds of being abused by a priest as a child, has taken all my courage. Much as I tried to ignore it or bury it, my whole adult life has been affected by that childhood trauma. The steps towards healing are different for everyone, and they are always complex and difficult. I came to a point – like at the intersection of the cross - where I wanted to stop hiding, or pretending that what happened was not affecting me. I did hear the cries of Jesus from the Cross when I went to church on all those Good Fridays. And it always moved me to tears to be in that procession and kiss the cross. In a strange way, I felt his words were my words too. Somehow, I felt he did understand and was with me. And then, gradually, over the Easter seasons in my life, I came to see the empty cross and the empty tomb. But I remained a ‘sad’ person, hard to show myself and make friends. For me, I needed gentle, patient encouragement to know and to find that my suffering too could end. That Jesus was alive, and I could be too. That I was not alone and could make those first steps away from that tomb that had held me in semi-darkness, towards building faith and trust again, being peaceful, and experiencing joy. I do not underestimate the power of prayer – and I thank you for your prayer.

Stop and think: What have you heard? What do you carry away with you?

Response

Prayer of trust and gratitude and hope; through Christ, we know that this is not the end of the story; we believe in God's healing power to overcome darkness

God our Strength, it is to you we turn, for you are our stronghold. (Pause)

For you show us how to love, and that love will overcome.

Jesus, from the cross you cried out, 'My God my God why have you forsaken me?'
and again the last, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'

We have heard of victims' feelings of abandonment.

By the transforming power of your cross and resurrection,
may they be set free from the darkness of the cross and the tomb,
and come to experience the new life you promise all who come to you.

On their healing path, may they come to know they are loved and cared for by you,
and by us, their sisters and brothers.

For every person, child or adult,
who has suffered the impact of abuse, may they receive the gift of your peace.

As members of your Body, the Church we will trust in you,
for you are with us as you promised.

Bless us on this healing path;
let your face shed its light upon us.

With grateful hearts, we give you thanks and praise
for your Holy Spirit at work in each person, child or adult,
able to achieve so much more than we can ask or possibly imagine.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

2. Alpha and Omega

Description: At the Easter Vigil, in continuing the preparation of the Paschal Candle the priest cuts the letter Alpha above the vertical line – ‘Christ is the beginning’. And he cuts the letter Omega below the vertical line – ‘Christ is the end’

Our experience

- In your life, what might it mean ‘to begin’? And ‘to end’?
- I wonder why Jesus is ‘the beginning’? And ‘the end’? What is he the beginning and the end of?

What about people who are hurting? We are thinking especially about people who have been hurt, those who have been abused; and those deeply affected by abuse in the church. Where is Jesus, Alpha and Omega, for them? We now listen to a Survivor of abuse in the Church:

Voice of Survivor (1)

Reflecting on the impact of abuse perpetrated by one in a position of authority in the Church. How has the Church responded to the victims’ cries?

For me, ‘a beginning’ was to tell the truth, because I had hidden the truth about myself for many years -that I had been a victim of abuse by a religious person, a priest, as a child. I tried telling someone but they didn’t believe me. So I blanked it out, but the fear was still operating under the surface, sub-consciously. I felt somehow ashamed. I couldn’t think good things about myself – what you’d call now ‘low self-esteem’. I found it really difficult to form any long-term or deep friendships or relationships, because those people might get too close and find out about me, and then they couldn’t possibly stay with me. It was like being frightened of having a car crash – it was better to stay off the road rather than take any risk at all. I often slipped into lonely black holes of depression, definitely feeling unworthy of anyone’s love or attention. So I hadn’t come to any point of seeing Christ as ‘the Beginning’ in my life, because that couldn’t possibly be true. How could Jesus Christ be the ‘beginning’, the Alpha, because he seemed not to be there, and surely would not want to be part of any of this mess? Perhaps he was too heartbroken? And I wonder, could he be the Omega, the ‘end’? That is a new, more hopeful question for me.

Response – Lament

With verses from Psalm 25

The Victims of abuse cry out:

*To you O Lord I lift up my soul, in you I trust O my God
Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.*

But we have let them be put to shame,
we have abandoned them to silence – the enemy’s tool of triumph.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have ignored God’s laws to love and protect children and vulnerable people from abuse;
we have not used our voices to speak up for them.

We have even ignored their voices.
And in playing the 'bystander' we have ignored the voice of our conscience too.
We have enabled the abuse to continue.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

How can we tell our brothers and sisters how deeply sorry we are?
How can we possibly make amends for the anguish
these uniquely created, precious children of God have endured —
the feelings of suffocation, terror, worthlessness, loneliness, heart-break?
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Voice of Survivor 2

'In my adult life I have learned that healing does come, but slowly. At the beginning of my healing journey, I discovered that little pockets of faith remained – but they were not mediated through the priesthood or authority in any form. They were more 'quiet' than 'bright', in the silence of a candle-lit space, or even an empty church, or someone being kind. And I have read about and listened to survivors, and shared stories and impacts, which has been a source of enormous inspiration and help. Just to find you are not alone, and be assured by people ahead of you on the path that you can find ways forward to new beginnings, new possibilities, new hope for endings in the Presence of One who heals.'

Stop and think: What have you heard? What do you carry away with you?

Response

(Rev 1:17-18; 21:3-7)

*Fear not, I am the first and the last and the living one.
I died and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death.*

O Lord, you unlock prison doors and break through all defences,
pouring out your healing love.

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.

You are with us and promise to remain with us until the end of time —
survivors, families, communities and the whole Body of Christ,
on a journey to wholeness and healing.

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning or crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.

You wipe away the tears and make all things new.

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give freely from the spring of the water of life.

You offer each person the refreshing water of life.

Alleluia!

Alleluia!

God our Strength, in thanksgiving we turn to you, for you are our stronghold.

Jesus, our beginning and our end, Alpha and Omega.

Holy Spirit, counsellor, bringer of peace (pause)

You show us radical love, and assure us that radical love working in us will overcome.

For our victims, survivors and all who suffer the impact of abuse,

drive away fear, and fill them with new hope.

We trust you. You are with them.

Bless all on this healing path; let your face shed its light upon them and their companions.

We trust you. You are with them.

With grateful hearts,

we give you thanks and praise for your Holy Spirit at work in each person, child or adult,
able to achieve so much more than we can ask or possibly imagine.

Through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

3. The Year — Time and the Paschal Mystery

Description: The next step in preparing the Paschal Candle - the priest cuts the four numbers of the current year, one number at each of the four intersections of vertical and horizontal lines of the cross – And as he cuts the numbers, he proclaims: “All time belongs to him, and all the ages, to him be glory and power through every age and forever”.

Our experience

- How do you ‘mark’ time passing in your life? What do you feel about ‘time passing’?
- In our faith: Christ is present beyond time and space, eternally present – among us and present with us now, and forever. And every day, in each liturgical year, we walk through the mysteries of his life, suffering, death and resurrection – including times for getting ready to come close to particular mysteries (Advent – for Christ’s birth, and a longer time Lent, in preparation for the even deeper mystery of Christ’s suffering and death; and the Easter vigil – making the journey towards the resurrection, six wonderful overflowing weeks of Easter season when we meet Jesus in a new way, and then Pentecost. And then the great, green ‘growing’ Sundays of the year, which we call ‘Ordinary time’).
- Yes Jesus had suffered and died on the cross – but then, they kept meeting him, suddenly, unexpectedly! He was still with them. And he is still with us.

What about people who are hurting? We are thinking especially about people who have been hurt, those who have been abused; and those deeply affected by abuse in the church. What has the passing of time meant for them? How do they feel? We now listen to the sister of a survivor reflecting on this pain.

Voice of a family member of a Survivor (1)

“I am now in my seventies but I have an indelible picture in my mind of a little boy standing alone in his school uniform at my school’s sports day. I looked at this little boy, my brother, and knew he was unhappy. I don’t know why I knew, but I knew. I spoke of my brother at his funeral five years ago, “as a child of eight, sent to school in England from a life of freedom in Africa...”

What I did not say was that at the age of 48, he told me one night as we sat up talking, of how he was repeatedly abused as a little boy, at his school. I listened horrified but not disbelieving. The story rang entirely true. The emotional damage to him had been deep and life changing. To know that he had held it to himself for years and years was devastating. I remembered with such deep sadness the child of eight, the rebellious teenager and the determined adult. My blood runs cold whenever I think of the horrors of child abuse and its impact. Later in my own life too I was to work in a school where child abuse was uncovered.

I am a mother and I am not sure that there is a worse and more damaging crime: for adults in positions of care and trust to wilfully abuse a little one for their own sick satisfaction. The ‘cover ups’ in the last decades speak of the deep lack of human understanding and emotional empathy. Our prayers perhaps should be for those that ‘cover up’, for those that are so lacking in humanity?”

Response

(using Psalm 87)

We lament as we hear the voices of victims and survivors through the psalmist:

*Lord my God, I call for help by day;
I cry at night before you.
Let my prayer come into your presence
O turn your ear to my cry.*

We halt before the suffering of the innocent victims, horrified but not disbelieving.

We cry to you.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

My life is on the brink of the grave

I am reckoned as one in the tomb

I have reached the end of my strength

Like one alone among the dead

We lament with tears the deep long-lasting harm done to our brothers and sisters by those among us who betrayed the trust placed in them

We lament the lack of understanding and emotional empathy in our response

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Like those you remember no more

Cut off, as they are, from your hand

You have laid me in the depths of the tomb

In places that are dark, in the depths.

Abandoned, lonely, unprotected

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Voice of survivor (2)

A real turning point for me has been seeing myself as a survivor, not a victim. I am never ‘just a victim’ – and I have choices. Good friends who know my story have said I am stronger than I think. I did not die when I was abused, although I often felt life was just going through the motions, ‘existing’ rather than living a happy life. But through the years, I have had opportunities to grow and change, every day, little by little. With the kind friends, who have listened and loved me, my own children who have listened and loved me, life has real joy in it. I am no longer stuck in the past or stuck in old patterns of behaviours coming from those early dark experiences of abuse. A friend showed me that in St Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he says when you expose something to the light, it becomes visible, and becomes light. Like waking up from a nightmare: ‘Awake O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ So yes, I look back, but more importantly, I see myself in the present, in that light, and that’s such a beautiful thing to be able to say now.

Stop and think: What have you heard? What do you carry away with you?

Response

Scripture Prayer of trust — Drawing on Ezekiel 37

We pray in trust and joyful hope:

Come from the four winds O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live. (v.9)

Fill us afresh, O Breath of life.

And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves. (v.14)

Fill us afresh, O Breath of life.

I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live. (v.14)

Fill us afresh, O Breath of life.

I will make a covenant of peace with them – an everlasting covenant. (v.26)

Fill us afresh, O Breath of life.

My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (v.27)

Fill us afresh, O Breath of life.

In listening to survivors, we also hear hope in their voices —
finding in life friends who listen and understand and soothe the pain;
finding joy in the everyday things;
being thankful for the ways God is with us all,
providing food for the soul.

For all of this, we give thanks.

Fill us afresh, O Breath of life.

Alleluia! Amen.

4. Grains of Incense – marking the wounds of Christ

Description In the final preparation of the Paschal Candle, the priest inserts five grains of incense into the candle in the form of a cross, saying: By his holy and glorious wounds, may Christ the Lord guard us and protect us. Amen. In some cathedrals and parishes these 'grains' are made and moulded round screw heads and often painted gold. Others buy the grains 'ready-made'

- The five wounds of Christ - the three nails that pierced his hands and feet, the spear thrust into his side, and the thorns that crowned his head) – represented by the incense grains pushed into the candle.
- Incense or 'frankincense' has a strong smell, used in both the Jewish and Christian faith, as a sign of holiness, and a sign to accompany sacrifice and atonement.
- The smell evokes the smell of spices a woman used to anoint Jesus as a sign of great respect and love; and those spices used in the wrapping of the body of Jesus before laying him in the tomb. It was a gift from one of the wise men at Jesus's birth.

Our Experience

- Have you ever been physically wounded/injured or scarred? What do your scars remind you of?
- When do we hear about the wounds of Christ? In his hands, feet, and side; thorns in his head.
- In the prayer accompanying the grains being inserted in the candle, the priest prays:
- By his holy and glorious wounds, may Christ the Lord guard us and protect us.
- We sing in the hymn 'Soul of My Saviour' 'Deep in thy wounds Lord, hide and shelter me'. I wonder what it means to be protected by or hidden in Christ's wounds? What do you think? Does Isaiah help at all here?
 - Isaiah 54.3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Like one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He took on our infirmities and carried our sorrows ...
- Thinking about these grains of incense in the candle - in what way might you find this a helpful symbol?
 - What about the sense of smell - what is important about this sense in life – for joy, or sorrow?
 - Not only are grains of incense inserted into the candle, but where possible, an altar server swinging the incense burner – walks before the Candle in its procession into the darkened church. How might the smell of incense contribute here?
 - What might be the role of incense in our rituals? Reverence? Mystery?

Voice of a Survivor (1)

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, Australian RC Bishop (10 August 1937 – 29 December 2020) spent many years confronting the root causes of abuse.

The systems of meaning that people build up are always fragile, for they are made up of the tiny fragments of their lived experience, the many loves, small and great, of their lives. Sexual abuse is a bulldozer gouging a road through this fragile ecosystem of love and meaning that a person has been painfully constructing.

(Voice of Survivor continued) Beth Crisp, Author, Survivor writes:

There is a priest (a friend) I know who would give me a formal blessing at the end of each conversation we had, until I explained that this was an unhelpful dynamic. While intellectually I know that I was being offered a loving gesture, it nevertheless felt like something imposed to which I had not been able to consent. In a strange way it put me in a situation of feeling as if control had been stripped from me, which was what the abuser had

done many years before. There were difficult lessons to be learnt from this and other situations where all that appeared to be happening was something quite innocuous that is the giving of a blessing. For me, one lesson was the discovery of just how deep were the scars of abuse that had happened long ago, which raised questions of just how many other loving acts lavished on me I had rejected or had just gone unnoticed.

Response

Lament. A verse from Psalm 141:2

May our prayer rise to you like incense.

O Lord, listen to our prayer, turn your ear our appeal

We listen to things we have not known about or understood.

We long to do the right and helpful thing.

We ask 'How can victims and survivors escape from their suffering?'

'Who is here to care for them?'

How can we face and respond to the wounds of innocent victims of abuse, perpetrated in your Body, the Church?

May our prayer rise to you like incense.

We cry to you Lord, our refuge.

May our prayer rise to you like incense.

About secrecy and cover-up.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Victims preyed upon — and then called liars.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Families emotionally and psychologically wounded by what happened to their children, their brothers and sisters.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The utter betrayal by trusted persons representing God and God's Church.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

With the best of intentions, we so often can get it wrong.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The powers of evil are strong, seemingly stronger than us.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Voice of Survivor (2)

A survivor continues: ‘Blessings are usually good things, something we can’t have enough of, and it seems fitting that a loving God would want to bless the faithful. And it would seem fitting that as followers of Jesus, we might want to offer blessings to others too. However, sometimes a blessing which is offered in a spirit of love may leave the recipient feeling uncomfortable, if not distressed.... I explained to my friend (the priest) that his ability to listen to this sometimes troubled soul and to not turn me away was itself a profound blessing, even if it wasn’t a blessing in his formulaic terms. — the words of Bishop Geoffrey Robinson — helped make sense of why I had reacted so strongly to a priest giving me a blessing and why, more generally, accepting love was so difficult for me.’

Stop and think: What have you heard? What do you carry away with you?

Response:

In breaking the silence of these dark secrets,
may we as companions to victims and survivors,
humbly listen to them and learn from them how best to meet their needs.

Lord Jesus, we trust you.

May we be ready to hear their truth and not ignore or shy away from it.

Lord Jesus, we trust you.

As members of God’s family, here in this place,
we are connected with everyone in the Body of Christ.
As we contemplate those bonds of connection,
we ask that you bless and protect
especially those among us who are victims or survivors of abuse.
Pour out your Spirit, O Lord, for a healing journey.

Lord Jesus, we trust you.

Bless our commitment together to accompany them.

Lord Jesus, we trust you.

We thank you for all the blessings given and received in our lives.
Those we can receive and those we find difficult to receive.

Lord Jesus, we trust you.

May they feel the power of your healing love.

Lord Jesus, we trust you.

5. Light

Description: The priest lights the paschal candle from the new fire saying: “May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds. Burning coals are taken from the fire and placed in the thurible, and the priest places grains of incense on the hot coals. The server carrying the smoking incense walks in front of the priest carrying the paschal Candle in procession into the dark church.

Our experience

- Light
 - When and why do we need light? What does light do?
 - And the light of the paschal candle - I wonder why it is special?
- It is the largest candle in the worship space.
 - It is lit throughout the Easter Season, and for every celebration of Baptism during the year. Every baptismal candle is lit from the Paschal Candle.
 - It is the light of Christ. It shows up the shadows hiding our selfishness and wrong-doing, and more importantly gives us Christ's Light to see as He sees, enabling us to be sorry, repent, and go out to love and live life to the full.
 - The light of the Risen Christ is present with us, working in and through our love and kindness.

Survivor (1)

This is our secret and you mustn't tell anybody. You are very special Sarah, very special indeed. Secrets can never be broken. However, if you do tell anyone, then God will know what you have done. Because I am a priest, God will inform me of your deed, and as a consequence you will need to be punished. I want you to remember Sarah, if God tells me you have been naughty, I will kill you. Do you understand? I will kill you.

Response:

Scripture - Lament with words from Psalm 14

Such unspeakable, grievous suffering has been inflicted — and using God's name.

We lament together,
acknowledging before our wounded brothers and sisters
the deep terror, the darkness, the horror
that no-one was seeing, no-one was listening, no-one was believing.

O God, my God.

*The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.*

O God, my God.

*They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt
There is none who does good, not even one.*

O God, my God.

Survivor (2)

One of my favourite hymns is 'Christ be our Light' — some of the words just stay in my head 'Longing for light we wait in darkness, longing for truth, we turn to you... Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts, shine through the darkness.' For so many years I was very self-protective, and I never spoke about the abuse I had suffered as a teenager – who would believe me anyway? It was shameful. I kept it in the dark. And years later, when I had my own family, mainly, I didn't want to upset anyone! But at a critical moment when the memories were just becoming overwhelming, a friend saw my pain, and sensed something was deeply hurting. It was like the right place and the right time, and she wanted to listen. Breaking my silence, and telling my story all these years later was so hard, but it was also such a relief. It's difficult to put into words. That friend cried with me. It didn't take away the pain, but telling it, and her compassion, did make it easier to bear, and that's when I feel the healing began. I have had some counselling, and for me it's really important to say I do go to Church now. I went first with this same listening friend. And after the initial fear, I began slowly to feel 'at home' and have made some friends there. I feel safe – and above all, I feel that the children who come are safe, everyone is safe. People are so much more aware of the need to make sure things are in place to make it safe. I do not share my story much — it is not the totality of me and I don't wish to be reduced to a list of 'survivor characteristics'! But my parish priest and close friends know. And I have said I am here if any other survivors need a listening ear and support. I think we are all survivors— all wounded in some way by life or relationships. And we all long for the light, and amazingly can come into the light and become light for others in our turn.

Stop and think: What have you heard? What do you carry away with you?

Response:

Prayer of trust drawing on the Exsultet prayer on the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil

Over the years of restless recovery, may your light shine brightly in the hearts of victims and survivors and all those who suffer as a consequence of abuse in the Church.

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

May the light of Christ rising in glory dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Let all corners of the earth be glad knowing an end to gloom and darkness.

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Lit on Easter night,

the Paschal Candle stands in our churches throughout the season of Easter and Pentecost, at every celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and the sacraments, we remember Christ rising from the tomb, overcoming darkness

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Through Christ, the night shall be as bright as day —

restoring innocence, joy to mourners, driving out hatred, bringing harmony.

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Final Closing Prayer

at the end of the reflections on the Paschal Candle

Invitation to engaging in a symbolic action of our own

Light T lights from Paschal Candle, or large candle at home, and sit quietly holding your candle

The Easter Candle Light is like a pillar of fire that glows to give glory to God.

May the light of our Paschal Candle, from which we light our little candles, mix in with the lights of heaven, and continue bravely burning to dispel the darkness of the night, the darkness of the sadness and difficulties we face, and especially may they burn for the hope and healing of all victims and survivors of abuse.

May the Morning Star which never sets find the flame still burning:

May Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead,
shed his peaceful light on all humanity, bringing healing and peace,
Through Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

Invitation: As we leave this space, we share a sign of peace with one another

Peace be with you.

Endnotes

- <?> Holy See Press Office, Testimonies of Survivors speaking at Rome Summit, 21 February 2019
- <?> Survivor testimony – they wished to remain anonymous
- <?> Survivor, wishing to remain anonymous
- <?> Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, quoted in ‘Beyond Crucifixion’ Beth Crisp, Darton Longman & Todd (2010)p.35
- <?> ‘Beyond Crucifixion’, p.35
- <?> Ibid. Beyond Crucifixion, p.36
- <?> ‘Sarah’ speaking in ‘Silenced by God: An examination of unique characteristics within sexual abuse by clergy’. Counselling Psychology Review, 15 (1) p.24, quoted in Beyond Crucifixion, Beth Crisp, DLT 2010 p 37
- <?> *Christ Be Our Light*, Bernadette Farrell (available in A Bernadette Farrell Songbook, published by Decani Music) and many hymnbooks