

The Peace of Christ beyond understanding

Quiet Hour

Aims

who is this resource for, what is the hope and purpose for this resource?

- Who is this for? Parish group, safeguarding training, formation groups in praying with and for victims and survivors of abuse, impacted families, and communities
- What is this resource? A quiet retreat-style 'Holy Hour' or 'Quiet Hour' experience Reflecting on the Gospel of the Day (Tues 5th Week Easter) for the National Day of Prayer, John 14:27-31, the Peace of Christ
 - Session can be face-to-face or on-line
- Purpose to share stories of survival and resilience, remembering the feelings in the face of challenges, and making it through tough times through:
 - Reflecting on our own life experience
 - Listening to the voice of God in Scripture (John 14)
 - Hearing the voice of a survivor of abuse in the Church (script read by someone present) – connecting scripture, and hope for pathway to peace for them;
- Connecting this with our hopes and prayers for survivors.
 - To observe where God is at work, in ourselves and others, with great mercy and compassion, with potential to reveal inner strength, even during or following very dark and difficult times.
- Closing Prayer for peace in the lives of survivors of abuse, and all those impacted by abuse in the Church.

NB Safeguarding notices/signposting, and pastoral care: Survivors are part of us and may be present among us, unidentified. A Listener support is available, observing, should anyone be upset or need support. Introduce the Listener support at the start.

Preparation

1. Download leader guide, survivor words, scripture text, the 10 photo images on one handout, or bring your own selection of postcard images
2. Prepare Phone or CD player, if you wish to have quiet background music to use at points in the session (e.g. on arrival, choosing images) set up playlist on Spotify or CD
3. Simple Focal point – e.g. candle, t-lights (& lighter/matches), bible, cloth, cross, images or postcards. Refreshments if offering.
4. Invite 2-3 readers to prepare: 1 or 2 for the Gospel, 1 for the Voice of a Survivor
5. Safeguarding – ensure information accessible, and listener support available

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Leader Guide – step by step process

Welcome, refreshment, gather seated round focal point – or on zoom.

Introduction to the session

(draw on 'Aims' above, including safeguarding/listening support)

Invitation

to reflect on our own experience. In a quiet moment, choose one of the images that says something to you about 'hanging on in there when the going gets tough'. Invite sharing (no pressure) 'Why I chose this image – what it might say to me'.

- Thinking about victims and survivors of abuse
- What is your reaction when you hear of people suffering abuse at the hands of other members of the Church, clergy or lay? What do you know? What have you heard? (Invite short responses from the heart) Victims have not been believed. Abuse has been covered up. Who can they turn to? They are part of us, members of our communities, our families.

Into our experience God Speaks

Lectio Divina (on the Gospel for 17 May, John 14:27-31)

- Introduce the reading Context: in the Gospel of St John, Jesus is with the community of his disciples, at the Last Supper; he has washed his disciples feet; he has given a new commandment, to each other just as he has loved them. He has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will teach them and remind them of all he has said. There is a sense of fear of being alone without Jesus. In this chapter, Jesus reassures them 5 times that the Holy Spirit will come to them. The Gospel today gives us one example.
- Invitation to listen, as if for the first time, to the Word of the Lord speaking into our lives, in this place, at this time, among us:
'Jesus said to his disciples: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace do I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say, I am going away, and I will come to you'. If you loved me you would have rejoiced because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father.'
(John 14:27-31)
- What word, phrase or image caught your attention? Go back to that and stay with it for a moment, repeating it silently to yourself. After a moment or two, Leader invites sharing of one word or phrase or image
- Listen to the Word of God for a second time
- What caught your attention? What does this say about Jesus, and those present with Jesus? What helped them?
- How does it speak to you in the face of difficulties in your life?
- And when we think about victims and survivors of abuse in the church?
- I wonder - what makes a difference? What helps?

Introduce the voice of a Survivor of Abuse within the church

(invite the person who has prepared to read out the script of our survivor's response to John 14: 27 – 31

My response on reading this passage was of pain. Survivors of abuse so often long for the peace that Jesus is speaking about, but cannot find it.

Abuse can make you feel cut off from God; no longer at home in the church which once you inhabited as your spiritual home. An aching void eats into your heart.

Jesus speaks so tenderly to His disciples. He loves them. He is concerned for them & wants to ease their heartache; He wants to encourage them; to strengthen them in His absence & give them hope.

His words of compassion have echoed through the ages, but a survivor can feel excluded, because when trust is badly broken it affects so much in life. Survivors tend to take on the perpetrator's guilt & shame. Then, as though it were their own, they carry this burden through life. Christ can seem very far away & often it feels too challenging to believe in His love.

Yet with all His heart Jesus wants to hold us close. Sadly, we cannot sense or believe this. Nor can we comprehend the words, (addressed to us, as to His disciples), 'Do not let your hearts be troubled & do not be afraid'. We fear to take up this loving invitation & be comforted.

I think that the Church, (clergy & laity alike), needs to renew its courage & continue in its efforts to reach out in genuine concern, to those who are wounded by abuse. Pray that they may feel securely held in God's care & hear those gentle words, 'My peace I leave to you. My peace I give to you'. Pray that they may know that they are loved – With a love that never fails

- After a short period of silence, invite participants to think on own first, and then share in 2's and 3's or whole group if small:
- What particularly touched you or caused you to stop and think as you heard this voice? How did it make you feel? What do you think?
- What made a difference? What helped? What did not?

Leader, invite further gentle conversation

Leader invites the group to re-gather

- Our time together has not been about cleverness or what we know. There are no right or wrong responses. We have been open and present to one another, and to God-with-us, guiding us as we share our experiences and thoughts. We have listened to what God might be saying to us now – through his Word, through our Survivor, through one another – revealing something of the mystery that courage, inner strength and resilience can emerge and make their presence felt in a journey towards healing. (Invite response)
- What remains with you? What felt like a blessing? What remains as a challenge?

Closing Prayer

(with T lights)

Leader invites a moment of silence, in gratitude for our time together.

- When you are ready, take a T light, light it, sit and remember. Allow your candle to symbolise whatever you want, your response to this time perhaps – and come and place it round the central candle here.

Invitation to offer a prayer for hope and healing before parting:

Holy God, source of all compassion and hope, refuge of those with troubled lives

Give comfort to all who suffer from abuse and violence.

Guide them towards healing for the wounds of body, mind and spirit.

Help us all, and make us one with you in your love for justice,

for every individual, family, and community who have been impacted by abuse.

Giver of peace beyond our understanding,

make us one in celebrating and living out your gift of peace today,

in our lives, and forever.

Amen.

- Invitation to sign of peace: As we leave this place, we offer one another a sign of peace, the peace that Christ gives, beyond anything this world can give. Peace be with you.

Handouts to Print Off or Screen Share:

1. Postcard Images (All On One Screen Share Or Handout)
2. Gospel Text
3. Voice Of Survivor
4. Text Of Closing Prayer

Gospel of the Day

'Jesus said to his disciples: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace do I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say, I am going away, and I will come to you'. If you loved me you would have rejoiced because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father'.

John 14:27-31, (Tuesday 5th Week Eastertide), English Standard Version

Closing Prayer

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Giver of peace beyond our understanding,
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Amen.

