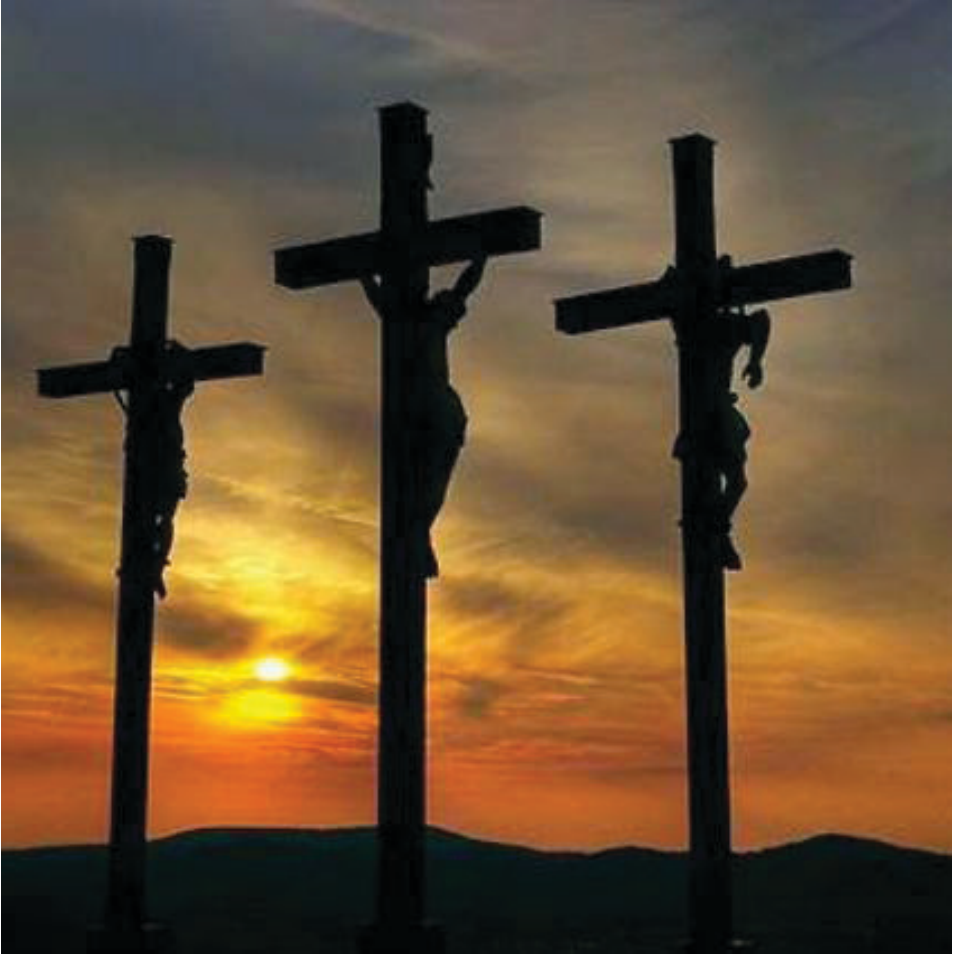


**“The Way of the Cross  
Through the Voice of Victims”**



**Supporting Victims of  
Clergy Sexual Abuse**

## **Archbishop's Message:**

*Thank you for coming to this way of the cross service. A special welcome to those of you who may be alienated from the church, who have been wounded by members of the church, or who are victims of clergy sexual abuse. It is our hope that you feel welcome here and we thank you for your presence.*

*This is not an easy way of the cross to participate in, and is not for the faint of heart. It asks us to listen to the voices of victims of clergy sexual abuse, so that we might get at least a glimpse of the darkness experienced there. For Christian believers, the stations of the cross are a traditional way of praying which draws us into the pain and suffering of Jesus, precisely in order to reveal the depth of God's love. But for victims of clergy sexual abuse, a church can be a very painful place. Where love was to be spoken and hope proclaimed, power was misused, wounds were inflicted, and God's love was not revealed, but hidden.*

*I invite you to enter into this service, finding the courage to listen deeply and compassionately to those who were wounded where they should have found love. And to look for the presence of the wounded Jesus, walking in solidarity with the victims, and calling us all to conversion and compassion.*

**+Donald Bolen**  
**Archbishop of Regina**

In this meditation you will hear  
different voices.

Interspersed with an account of Jesus  
as he is led to his crucifixion,  
at each station you will hear the words,  
pain and anguish of victims  
of clergy sexual abuse,  
how they are crucified  
and the crosses they bear.

## **Introduction to the Way of the Cross**

We are inviting all those present at this prayer service to be open and to listen, to join one another in this journey of bringing light to a darkness which exists in our community concerning clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. We acknowledge in a very special way those victims who are not able to be present here today, their pain too deep to enter through the doors, and for those who have lost their battle and are no longer with us.

The truth is that clergy sexual abuse is part of our past and part of our present. The victims of abuse have suffered for years and continue to suffer today. Many suffer alone, in silence, in denial, crippled with varying degrees of guilt, anger, shame, and the constant sense of being betrayed. Many live with the blame the church has placed upon the victims for speaking out.

The friends and families of the victims, in fact all relationships, are also affected by their brokenness, the loss of trust and peace that these betrayals have brought to those they love. Abuse does powerful damage to all relationships, with far reaching consequences.

The church in its broadest sense, the people of God, has also been affected by this horrific plague of abuse. Many have left the church, not reconciled with what has happened to them or their loved ones. Others have been alienated or cast aside by a church that doesn't understand or acknowledge the abuse. Others still heap blame on the victims for not remaining silent. Those that choose to remain with the church may experience shame, guilt, embarrassment and anger with the institution's failure to do justice.

We stand broken. All of us.

We invite you, in this meditation, to walk with victims, to listen to the voices as victims speak from within, hearing something of their experience, and to link their experience to that of Jesus.

## **Opening Song**

# 1. Jesus is condemned to death.

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, you stand alone before Pilate. All have abandoned you. Nobody speaks up for you. Nobody helps defend you.

**Victim # 1:**

Will I be denied as well? I am abandoned and afraid. I am treated unfairly and blamed unjustly for just being a victim. I see the church represented in Pilate, unable to accept the truth. When I tried to speak out, I was accused instead. They refused to listen so I could not break the sacred code of silence. I am powerless. Not only am I an innocent victim of the perpetrator who inflicted unspeakable acts on me, but also a victim of the church who sees me as someone to be destroyed, “put to death” like Jesus, in order for it to remain powerful.

**All:**

Jesus, innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## **2. Jesus carries his cross.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, you are already so weak from the scourging; yet you bear this cross.

**Victim # 2:**

I didn't choose to be given this cross. It is so heavy and I am afraid, as I am too small and ill equipped to deal with such a heavy cross. Why me? What did I do to deserve this? I didn't choose to be damaged and crushed.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

### **3. Jesus falls the first time.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, you are becoming weak and almost ready to faint, and you fall down. Nobody seems to want to help you. The soldiers yell at you and try to get you up and moving again.

**Victim # 1:**

I have fallen too. I told a priest what happened to me and I was confronted and he told me I was mistaken, that this clergy person would never do such a thing. I was not believed. Using the power of the institution, he challenged, demeaned and victimized me, pushing me down, killing any flicker of light that remained in my soul to continue on. My power stolen, I am less than.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## **4. Jesus meets his mother.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, alone, amidst the confusion and pain, your eyes meet the eyes of someone who cares, your eyes meet those of your mother.

**Victim # 2:**

Who can I turn to? I am so overwhelmed and alone. The church should be like a mother, nurturing and loving, but so often it is not. Who are those life-bearers in my life? To whom can I trust to hear my pain? When I encounter another victim, although we have different experiences, it is then I see I am not alone. I reached out to someone and told my story and they listened to me.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.



## **5. Simon helps Jesus carry the cross.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

The soldiers are becoming impatient, Jesus. They are afraid you won't make it to the hill where you will be crucified. So they grab a man out of the crowd and make him help carry your cross. Simon was just watching and was forced to carry the cross for you.

**Victim # 1:**

No one wanted to help me at first as I lay with grave wounds in my soul. I had lost my innocence, and my spirit was broken. I had been sexually abused. I had been physically, emotionally and spiritually raped, beaten down by the church. I could not find solid footing and didn't think I could continue. At times, I too have had a Simon compelled to assist me and help me carry my cross. Others have lifted the burden by reaching out, another speaking their truth, and another...

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## **6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, suddenly a woman comes out of the crowd. Her name is Veronica. You can see how she cares for you as she takes a cloth and begins to wipe the blood and sweat from your face.

**Victim # 2:**

There is no one who can take away this pain or heal the wounds that run so deep, nor the scars that will never form. But sometimes there is a chance meeting with someone who sits for a moment, looks at me and changes things for an instant. Sometimes there is a Veronica who comes out of the crowd and makes a difference in my life.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## **7. Jesus falls the second time.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, this is the second time you have fallen on the road. As the cross grows heavier, it becomes more difficult to get up. But you continue to struggle and try until you're up and walking again. You don't give up.

**Victim # 1:**

I tried a second time to tell my story. This time I told someone working within the institutional church and I was ignored. What power I had regained was once again stolen. I too have been pushed to the ground. I lay broken with a heavy cross upon me. I found myself struggling, but I didn't stay down. I got up again, the weight still crushing me.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## 8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, as you pass by these women you see their grief. You stop to speak to them. Although you have been abandoned by your friends and are in pain, you recognize hearts that ache like yours.

**Victim # 2:**

The doubt that others have cast upon me has caused me to even doubt my own abuse...maybe I am crazy? Then in my search for something I see that I am not alone, there are countless people who are victims of clergy sexual abuse, that I am not the first, nor will I be the last. Each one of us feels so alone and not aware that others exist...this is a painful realization of how well the church has done in keeping this secret quiet and sweeping it under the rug. But others have broken their silence, and have tried to share their stories. It is together, caring for one another, that we can face this brokenness.

**All:** Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## **9. Jesus falls the third time.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, you fall again and struggle to your feet, weak and tormented.

**Victim # 1:**

Every time I hear about another abuse case, I am defeated and fall to the ground. Each time I hear about church leaders who have protected the perpetrators, I relive the nightmares and have flashbacks. The anger smothers me and I can't breathe.

Even after confronting the church, equipped with the knowledge that I am not the only victim, my efforts are met with anger and again I am pushed to the ground. Many do not want me to rise up and tell my truth. I am pushed down in such a way that I am riddled with pain, tormented and thrown into a deep darkness where I am expected to stay.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## **10. Jesus is stripped of his clothes.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, beaten and broken, the soldiers see that you still have something of value. They remove your clothes and throw dice for them. You have lost everything but you still have your dignity. They strip you and even that is gone. Your wounds are torn open once again.

**Victim # 2:**

The church does everything it can to expose me as a fraud, lies are told about me and everyone turns against me. The light that was once my guide has been extinguished. The abuser is once again protected and moved to a different parish, opening the door to more abuse and victimization.

I too was stripped, exposed, made vulnerable. And each time I share my story, or relive it in nightmares, I am stripped again. The doors of the church are locked to me, but unlocked for everyone else. They have insulted me, threatened my family and made it clear I am not worthy. Jesus, exposed and mocked in such a way, over and above the lashes, the crown of thorns and the carrying of the cross, you help me to know that you understand my pain.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## **11. Jesus is nailed to the cross.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Having done nothing but good, Jesus, they drive spikes into your hands. I can hear your screams, and I want to stop the noises in my head.

*[Stations 11 and 12 both read by Victim # 1.]*

**Victim # 1:**

Every time I am not believed or have been challenged to get on with my life, more nails are hammered into me and the pounding continues. Some say they believe me yet do nothing to help me. I have been thrown into darkness but that is not enough. I am tortured, hung out with no peace in the darkness. Words are like nails that thrust more wounds into my body. Actions, in-actions and denial cause deep pain and keep me nailed to the cross.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## 12. Jesus dies on the cross.

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:** Jesus, you died....

*[Stations 11 and 12 both read by Victim # 1.]*

### **Victim # 1:**

Something died in me the day my innocence was taken from me. I am empty like an abandoned shell. A double murder...of the body and of the soul. Sometimes I wish that death would take away my emptiness. Plunged in the darkness, despair consumes me and I can't imagine that I will ever see the light again.

### **All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

*(A longer period of silence to acknowledge the death...)*



## **13. Jesus is taken down from the cross.**

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

The body of Jesus was held fast by the heavy spikes. It would have been difficult to pull out those nails to free your hands and feet from the heavy wood. But it must be done!

**Victim # 2:**

So it is for all victims nailed to their cross, by abuse. I too, want to be taken down from the cross of my pain. I do not want to be kept fastened to the cross as the church continues its lies, deceit, and cover-up. I want to be free from the clutches of despair and the torment to stop. How can I be freed from this cross? I can't do it alone. I need support. I need a church that cares, risks being honest with itself and is accountable. Although my trust has been shattered and all hope lost, I want to be able to grieve for the parts of me that died the day the abuse started. I also grieve for those victims who remain nailed to their cross.

**All:**

Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## 14. Jesus is placed in the tomb.

**Leader:** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

**All:** I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night,  
I find no rest.

**Narrator:**

Jesus, your lifeless body is wrapped in a shroud and placed in a tomb. To accept the death is to allow the grieving to happen, to remain in the tomb... sitting with the pain and grief.

**Victim # 1:**

All has been taken from me. I lie alone, in the darkness of the tomb. The life of who I could have been is forever gone. My childhood stolen from me forever altered. All hope, trust, and faith are gone. What is there to do but lie and wait, but wait for what? There can not be new life, no resurrection until the reality of what was done to me is fully acknowledged; until the burden is no longer mine to carry, placed upon those who are responsible for it. My grief will never be gone. The pain is forever. This is my reality, one that was thrust upon me, one that even in death I must carry.

**Victim # 2:**

Yet I am reminded of the cocoon stage of the butterfly...those days of dark waiting before new life and new transformation emerges. I can't skip this waiting period, as it is an important time of grieving and mourning for what died within me. Can there be death to new life with me? Can my tomb eventually become like a womb that gives birth to new life?

Each time I hear a new voice speak out, each time a bishop listens and acts, each time a parish chooses to face this difficult issue with courage, each time the lies, deception and failures are acknowledged and the truth is declared... can the stone be rolled away and people rise from their tombs?

**All:** Innocent victim of the violence of humanity, I see you suffer and I remain unmoved. I am so caught in my own concerns, I am so fearful of my own insecurity that I do not wish to enter into your pain or the pain of your victimized people. I confess that I have become part of the problem. Standing aside, denying your pain, justifying the injustice, I have become as those who have led you to your death. Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be with you now so that I can bear your truth and embrace your compassion. Help me to walk one more step with you.

## **Closing Prayer: Psalm 22: 1-2, 14-15, 19-20a, 21**

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

*Why are you so far from helping me,  
from the words of my groaning?*

*O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night, but find no rest.*

*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint;*

*My heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;*

*My mouth is dried up like sunbaked clay,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;*

*You lay me in the dust of death.*

*But you, O Lord, do not be far away!*

*O my help, come quickly to my aid!*

*Deliver my soul from the sword.*

*Save me from the mouth of the lion!*

*From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.*

## **Closing Song**

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If you are a victim of clergy sexual abuse, or have been affected by this reality, and would like to meet with someone at a later date, feel free to contact the Archbishop's Assistant at 1-306-352-1651- Ext. 227, and she will direct you to a resource person; or contact CARES Healing Community at [thehealingcommunity@gmail.com](mailto:thehealingcommunity@gmail.com).

Thank you for participating in this meditation. We encourage you to continue the conversation about the devastation caused by clergy sexual abuse. Resource people are available immediately following the service should you wish to speak with someone about this difficult topic.

***Written by a special committee in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Regina, including parish members and victims of clergy sexual abuse within and outside of the church. Should you wish to make use of this service please contact the Archdiocese of Regina for written consent.***