



Truth Justice and Healing Council Forum

**Mr Francis Sullivan
Chief Executive Officer
Truth Justice and Healing Council**

**Sacred Heart Girls' College
Monday, 12 October 2015**

WELCOME TO COUNTRY:

PRAYER: MERCY HAS A HUMAN HEART!¹

Leader: Let Us Stand and Pray.

Tonight we are here to listen and learn about the work of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council. Let us stand in a moment of silence with our God – the God of tenderness and mercy, who calls us to love in the same way with generosity and kindness.

Lighting of the Candles

READER: The Candle of Sadness:

As we light this candle we remember with deep sadness the women and men whose lives have been lost or destroyed by the acts of sexual abuse committed against them when they were children.

God of loving kindness, have mercy on us.

All: God of loving kindness, have mercy on us.

READER: The Candle of Sorrow:

As we light this candle we remember with sorrow the times when some of the leaders of our Church community refused to listen to cries for help and turned against vulnerable children and their families.

God of loving kindness, have mercy on us

All: God of loving kindness, have mercy on us.



READER: Candle of Hope:

As we light this candle we pray for the light of hope. We commit ourselves to always stand in the light and to never again allow the darkness of sin to stop us from becoming the presence of respectful love and kindness.

God of loving kindness have mercy on us.

All: God of loving kindness have mercy on us.

¹ William Blake

READER:

Dear God, we the people of the Church, come before you this evening with deep sorrow in our hearts.

We are filled with sorrow that so many of our children have suffered the pain of sexual abuse leaving them with lifelong scars. We are concerned for their parents, their families, friends and communities who are also affected by these violations of their loved ones.

We are deeply saddened and shamed that this abuse was committed by people in our faith communities whom we held in high regard and because of their status we placed our trust in them and in the institutions for which they were responsible. Our trust was betrayed.

God of loving kindness have mercy on us.

All: God of loving kindness have mercy on us.

READER:

In his recent visit to America Pope Francis said:

"...the stories, suffering and pain of the children abused by priests is engraved in my heart.

I continue to feel an overwhelming sense of embarrassment because of those who had in their care the little ones and caused them great harm."

"I am deeply sorry," the Pope said .

*And then he added: "**Our God cries!**"*

Pope Francis describes **God as one who weeps** for the intolerable suffering of generations of children who have been sexually abused within our Church communities.

We, too, weep with God.

With the Pope, we are deeply ashamed and sorry that such sexual violence has taken place in our Church communities. And with great sorrow we know that their cries for help fell on closed eyes, ears and hearts. We feel hurt and betrayed by this.

God of loving kindness have mercy on us.

All: God of loving kindness have mercy on us.

READER:

Please sit and listen to a reading adapted from the Gospel of Luke 7: 36 - 50
"One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to his home for dinner. Jesus went to the house and took his place at the table.

A woman, who was considered to be unworthy of respect in the town, heard that he was in the Pharisees' home and she unexpectedly paid a visit. She went right into the dining room. She took with her an alabaster flask of ointment and standing behind Jesus she wept with grief, her tears falling on and wetting his feet. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with the ointment.

The Pharisee was shocked and became critical of Jesus. He thought to himself “if this man is really a prophet he would know what kind of woman this is and he wouldn’t let her touch him. She is notorious for her depravity.” He was horrified that she had come into his house!

But Jesus said to the Pharisee: Do you see this woman? This woman who has honoured me – *can you see her?*

Jesus finally said to her: “Woman, your faith is strong – it has saved you! Go in peace!”

We pause for a moment to reflect in silence

READER:

Dear God, we your people ask for eyes to see clearly to the heart of the matter. Together we say: Never again! Never again will we let darkness cover sinfulness in our Church community.

ALL RESPOND: Lord, hear our prayer

READER:

God of loving kindness, we your people pledge ourselves to be vigilant in the care of our children. We pledge ourselves to make our Church communities places of welcome, kindness and support to all who have suffered the horrors of abuse.

ALL RESPOND: Lord, hear our prayer

READER:

Dear God, we the people of the Church, pledge ourselves to stand by all who suffer and to reach out with hearts and hands of mercy.

ALL RESPOND: Lord, hear our prayer

READER:

Tonight we listen to a man of faith within the Catholic community who accepted to be the CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council. Our brother, Francis Sullivan, accepted this role to coordinate the Church’s response to the Royal Commission in the Institutional Child Sexual Abuse with a commitment to justice and compassion for survivors. He has taken on himself the burden of ensuring that voices of those who have suffered will not only be heard, but will be respected and treated with justice.

We pray for him. He has become the public face of our Church listening to and demanding justice for the many people severely hurt by this sinfulness within our Church.

That is why we begin tonight by gathering in prayer so that in understanding we may become a people committed to living with the justice and loving kindness of our God.

ALL RESPOND: Lord hear our prayer

