

Community Resources

Draft address to Parishioners regarding a Parish response to the Royal Commission.



Read by a member of the Royal Commission Discussion group at mass

With the encouragement of Father [insert name], a small group of about ten parishioners from St [insert parish name] met several times during Lent to discuss and pray about the impact that the Royal Commission into the Sexual Abuse of Children would have on survivors, on our parish community and on the Catholic Church in Australia.

The group brought a range of emotions, ideas and opinions to the discussions. We discussed what might be the needs of the survivors of sexual abuse, especially those who may be part of our community, and how we might best support them. We acknowledged the need to achieve justice and hopefully peace through the Royal Commission process and by the future response of the Catholic Church.

Otherwise members of the group reflected on what we concluded would be the common reactions of many Catholics. Some were confused and worried about the impact the Royal Commission could have on families in our parish, on the standing of the clergy and on the reputation of our Church in the wider community. Some were concerned about the long term strength of our Church and the impact on young people and vocations. Others were angry at the response by some Catholic authorities to cases of abuse in the past. All hoped that the work of the Royal Commission would lead to positive improvements in the way our society protects and values children.

Over six meetings, we prayed and reflected on these matters and concluded that there were a number of initiatives that we could undertake as individuals and as a parish community that may help others deal with the challenges thrown up by the reality of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church and by the work of the Royal Commission. We concluded that the best model for our response would be found in the life of Jesus. His openness to and protection of children, his condemnation of hypocrisy and evil and his compassionate, loving and just approach to all those in need were qualities that should guide and inspire our response.

After discussion, debate and prayer, we developed the following ideas.

Believing that prayer was an essential response, we developed our own Parish Prayer for Healing which is printed in the Parish bulletin. It could be prayed individually or together as a congregation, when appropriate.

1. Prayers of the Faithful

We have been praying about these issues for some time in the Prayers of the Faithful and we felt that it was important that this continues but that we develop a range of different prayers which will then be used on a rotation basis.

2. A Sacred Space in the Church for Reflection

We felt that it was appropriate to develop a specific place in our church for reflection and prayer where our new Parish Prayer of Healing could also be displayed. We felt that the statue of the Sacred Heart on the western wall of the Church would be the most appropriate place.

3. A Parish Prayer Card

It was decided that it was a good idea to print a Parish Prayer card which was available for parishioners and had our new Parish Prayer for Healing on one side and on the other, contact details for various Professional Support Groups within and outside the Church.

4. A Parish Information and Prayer Meeting

We felt that other parishioners may like to come together to give their ideas as to how we best respond to the Royal Commission. To this end, an evening has been set aside on Tuesday, May 7 at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre for interested members of our community to meet. It was felt that this may be the opportunity to gauge our parishioners' interest in further prayer and discussion opportunities.

We are very conscious that this is a difficult issue for many Catholics and that there are a variety of views in our Parish about how we should respond. We welcome those different views and hope that the ideas developed so far are understood and supported. We hope that in coming together to support survivors and each other as we deal with this issue, we will strengthen our sense of community. We thank Father Paul for his continued support and leadership.

Thank you for listening.