

MEDIA RELEASE

Special service for child abuse survivors in Ballarat



15 September 2014

Last week Father Justin Driscoll from St Patrick's Cathedral in Ballarat invited the local community to special Liturgy of Lament services to reflect on the children assaulted by priests and other members of the church in Ballarat over the past 50 years.

Father Driscoll said the service was part of the church's attempts to recognise wrongs of the past.

"These liturgies of lament are one part of our response to the hurt felt by many in our community," Fr Driscoll said.

"The gathering to lament offers time and space for people to acknowledge their feelings, silently or with words, and to know they are not alone."

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council said the services demonstrate the importance the local Catholic community places on walking with the victims of abuse.

"This is a wonderful initiative that should serve as a model for other Catholic communities around the country," Mr Sullivan said.

Father Driscoll said Church practices had changed following its decades-long protection of paedophile priests.

"In our parishes and schools we now have very active and stringent processes for protecting children."

A Liturgy of Lament is primarily an outpouring of community grief on the occasion of an overwhelming calamity.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse heard from some 21 child abuse survivors in Ballarat last week.

Media contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018

The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

For more information on the Royal Commission go to:

<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>