

# Never Again

A Liturgy of Prayerful Solidarity  
with all those impacted by the sexual abuse of children



24 October 2018

6.00pm

Christ Church Cathedral  
Grafton

Welcome to your Cathedral for this significant liturgy.

This service contains material that may cause distress. Please feel free to participate as you are able. A counsellor is available. The chapels are available as places for quiet reflection.

Prior to the service a single bell tolls as an invitation for us to recognise the solemn nature of the service.

At 6.00pm the bell ceases to toll.

A period of silence follows

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

*For thousands of years Indigenous people have walked in this land, on their own country. Their relationship with the land has been at the centre of their lives. We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we gather and their stewardship of this land throughout the ages.*

## **Welcome**

*The Bishop offers a welcome*

## **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we give thanks for the mystery and gift of human life, and for your love, made known in many ways. In the holiness of this time we ask that your Spirit meet us, in silence and song; in strength and weakness; in brokenness, and in the longing for greater wholeness. In your mercy, we ask for your blessing on the children in our care; the children who have been in our care; and the children who will come into our care. We pray in the name of the one called the Christ. **Amen.**

## **The First Reading**

Matthew 18.1–14

The disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

'If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling-blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling-block comes! 'If your hand or your foot causes

you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.

‘Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church  
**Thanks be to God**

*A period for reflection will follow the reading.*

### **The Second Reading**

Psalm 51.1–2, 10–12, 15

Have mercy on me, O God, in your enduring goodness:  
according to the fulness of your compassion blot out my offences.

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness:  
and cleanse me from my sin.

Create in me a clean heart, O God:  
and renew a right spirit within me.

Do not cast me out from your presence:  
do not take your holy spirit from me.

O give me the gladness of your help again:  
and support me with a willing spirit.

O Lord, open my lips:  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

## **Reflecting on the Messages to the Royal Commission**

*The Bishop offers a few words*

*The Bishop continues*

You may wish to move quietly about the Cathedral, or perhaps light a candle as you offer a prayer for healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Please remember that counsellors are available at the west end and the chapels are available for you to sit, reflect and pray as you wish.

*Words representing childhood, broken in pieces, are placed on the symbol table*

*A gong will sound to call us back to our seats*

### **A Lament**

*The following chant from the ecumenical Taizé community in France will be sung several times as prayer for victims and survivors, for their families and communities, for our nation and for ourselves.*

**O Lord, hear my prayer,  
O Lord, hear my prayer:  
when I call answer me.  
O Lord, hear my prayer,  
O Lord, hear my prayer:  
come and listen to me.**

Jacques Berthier, 1923–94  
Based on Psalm 102:1,2

## **A Prayer of Repentance and Apology**

God of justice,  
we acknowledge our failure to protect children and other vulnerable people  
in our churches, schools, organisations and institutions.  
We acknowledge our failure to recognise the harm done.  
We recognise that we failed to listen and to believe,  
and that our leaders discounted the experience of those who were abused  
and minimised the actions of abusers.  
We have failed to live the values of the gospel  
and have not been the community you call us to be.  
We deeply regret our failures: in what we did and failed to do.  
We offer you our grief, confusion, anger and bewilderment.  
May our apology to those whom we have failed bring them some comfort.  
We offer you this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **The Third Reading**

Ezekiel 37.1–14

A Reading from the Prophet Ezekiel

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church  
**Thanks be to God**

*A candle is lit*

### **A Prayer of Commitment**

**Loving God, give us what we need for this journey.  
Encourage us with your compassion and your strength.  
Help us to listen carefully and to wait patiently.  
Help us to recognise  
the feelings of those who have been betrayed and abused  
and to understand our own.  
Give us courage for the days ahead,  
resilience as we seek to support those who were abused,  
and grace to persevere when pain is prolonged.  
Transform your church.  
Strengthen us as we seek to make amends.  
Show us how to become agents of peace, love and justice,  
so that our churches may be places of safety and healing.  
Protect us with your power, and bring us all to the fullness of life and peace,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **The Blessing and Dismissal**

Go forth into the world in peace;  
be of good courage;  
hold fast that which is good;  
render to no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the faint hearted; support the weak;  
help the afflicted;  
give honour to all; love and serve the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

*Please stay for refreshments in the west end of the Cathedral.*