

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We have come to a time in our faith's history when the vocabulary of our narrative includes such phrases as: "victims of the Church and its ministers" and "crimes against the young and the vulnerable committed by cardinals, bishops and priests." People respond to this reality with anger, disgust, hurt, disappointment and shame. While some of the steps that need to be taken are clear, the whole way forward is not so clear except to say our Church is in need of deep reparation, extensive reform and rebuilding. As I have written the last several weeks, now is the time for all of us to redouble our commitment to the Church, not to leave it. It's a time to give voice to anger and hurt, to seek ways to be part of the Church's repentance, to contribute our time and prayer to rebuilding what others have dismantled. With this in mind, our Parish Pastoral Council is offering two moments of prayer in the weeks ahead.

(1) On Wednesday night, October 3, we will gather in the church for prayer and lamentation. Lamentation? Well, as you probably know, there's a Book of Lamentations in the bible. As a literary work, the Book of Lamentations combines elements of communal and individual laments (in which the speakers attempt to persuade God to intervene in the face of an acute crisis), funeral dirges (in which a death is mourned), and ancient city-laments (in which the destruction of a city is mourned). I think you can readily see how these themes relate to our present situation in the Church. And I'm sure that all of us are lamenting the abuse of innocent children, the abuse of power and authority and the betrayal of the trust and confidence of the people of God. There is, indeed, much to lament. Our time of prayer on October 3 will include scripture, music and the opportunity for individuals to come to a microphone and lament:

O God, I grieve over...	O God, I lament the loss of...
O God, I lift up the pain of...	O God, I'm angered by...
O God, I cry for justice for...	O God, my heart is broken by...
O God, I weep over...	O God, I plead with you...
O God...	

Recognizing that not everyone might choose to speak their lament publicly, there will also be paper and pencils for you to write your lament and come forward to place it in a basket on the altar. After the prayer service, any who choose may remain for conversation with the Parish Council and me.

(2) October is the month of the Holy Rosary and October 7 is the feast of the Holy Rosary. On Sunday night, October 7, we will have Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction, praying the Rosary together in reparation for the harm done to innocent victims and to all in the Church.

No, these opportunities to pray together will not resolve the crisis in which we find ourselves. But these moments will bring us together, the local Catholic Church, to lament, to pray, to intercede, to ask God's Spirit to anoint us and the whole Church for the work of reforming and rebuilding the life and structures of the faith community we call our own, the Body of Christ whose members we are: the Catholic Church.

Perhaps you've wondered, "What can I do? what can I do to help?" I believe these two times of prayer are a place to begin. I have been so blessed by watching how the people of our parish, burdened with the news of the day, continue to gather to pray, to work, to serve the poor and to form our children in faith. Maintaining our life in Christ in his Church is where we begin to redouble our efforts and begin the work of reform. I pray, I hope, I trust you will join us in this effort. The presence and prayer, the support of every individual in our parish is important for the life and future of our faith.

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming