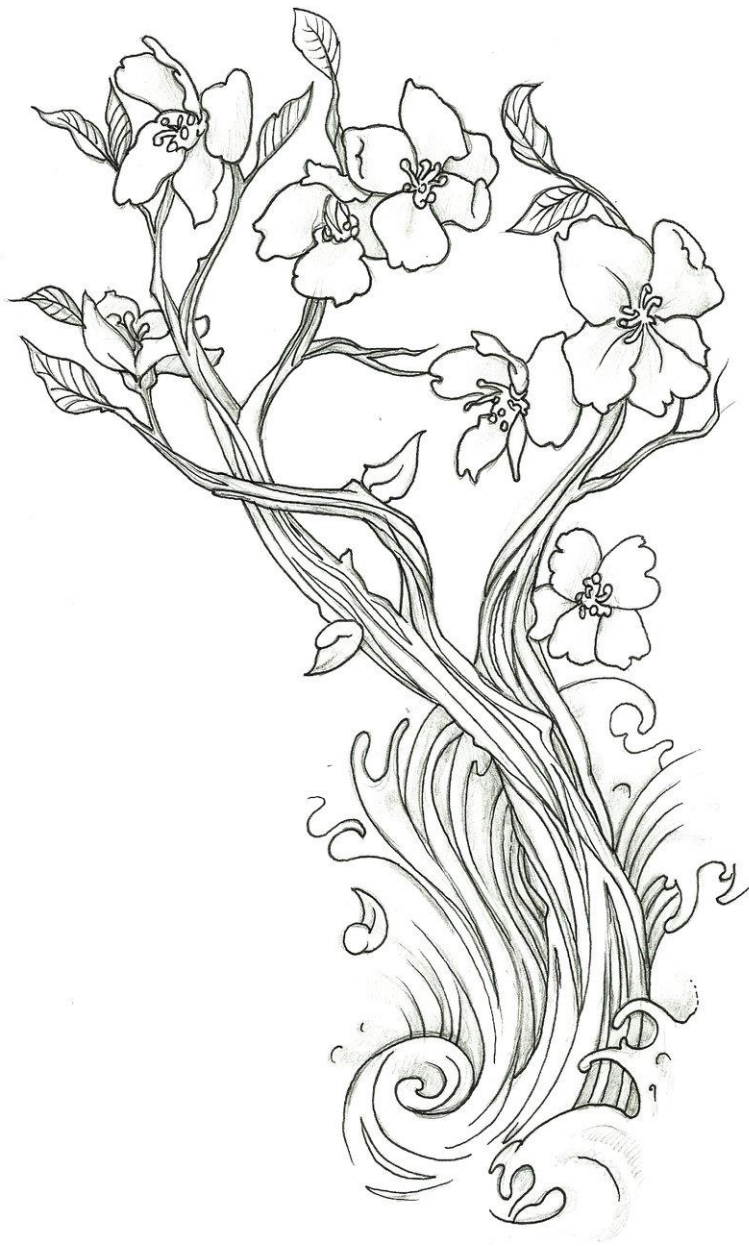


**Prayer Gathering  
St Matthew's Church  
8 April 2018**



**“Come to me”** by Western Priory

Refrain: Come to me, all who labour and are heavy burdened, and I shall give you rest.  
Take up my yoke and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.  
And you'll find rest for your souls. Yes my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Verse: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall never be in need.  
Fresh and green are the meadows where he gives me rest.

Refrain: Come to me, all who labour and are heavy burdened, and I shall give you rest.  
Take up my yoke and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.  
And you'll find rest for your souls. Yes my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

**MC:** Welcome

### **Gathering Prayer**

Loving God, we gather here today as a community at St Matthew's Church in the South Belconnen Parish..

We are grateful to be part of a community that supports each other and seeks to acknowledge our history, including the sad and distressing parts, and also to move on with hope and faith.

We gather in sorrow because children in our parish have been subjected to abuse.  
We find it so hard to think of children being deliberately hurt and preyed upon. We feel so helpless.  
Yet we know it has happened, and we must not turn away from this reality.  
Their innocence was betrayed.

We remember the children's families and close friends who have had to bear their own pain and hurt while supporting the children in their growing years.

We also mourn our own loss of innocence as a result of these shameful actions.

Guide us Lord as we seek to bring healing and hope to the children, their families, and indeed all of us who have been betrayed.  
In the name of Jesus, the Lord.

**All:** Amen

### **Prayers of the faithful**

With humility of heart, we pray to God, whose love and faithfulness endures for ever.

We pray for children who have been abused.  
We understand that their lives have been impacted in terrible ways.  
Help us to be willing to listen to, and believe, the stories of children, even when we feel like turning away.  
May they know the power of God's love for them.  
Jesus hear us.

**All:** Jesus, who welcomed children, hear our prayer.

We pray for the families of children who have been abused, especially by clergy and religious.  
May the Lord of tenderness and compassion restore them and give them peace.  
Jesus hear us.

**All:** Jesus, who gives peace, hear our prayer.

We pray for our parish community and all people in the Church.  
May we become more and more a community that actively protects the most vulnerable people in society, particularly our children. Help us turn our words into actions.  
Jesus, hear us.

**All:** Jesus, who is always with us, hear our prayer.

We pray for our Church leaders.

May God grant them empathic and listening hearts, and an abundance of compassion and wisdom.  
Jesus hear us.

**All:** Jesus, the source of love, hear our prayer.

We pray for those in the healing professions. May God continue to give them wisdom, compassion and strength to support those who have suffered sexual abuse.  
Jesus hear us.

**All:** Jesus, who brings healing and hope to all, hear our prayer.

We pray for all people.

May the Spirit of Wisdom enlighten us to put an end to acts of violence and abuse, in all forms.  
Jesus hear us.

**All:** Jesus, gentle and kind, hear our prayer.

### **Prayer**

God our Rock and our Strength on whom we lean,  
help us to create an atmosphere of trust  
which allows the unspeakable to be said.

Help us to live with our painful memories and our sense of betrayal.  
May we support each other and create safe places for each other,  
and may we work for a future free from violence and abuse.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen

### **Gospel reading**

#### **Gospel according to Matthew 11:28-30**

Jesus exclaimed:

'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened,

And I will give you rest.

Shoulder my yoke and learn from me,

For I am gentle and humble of heart,

And you will find rest for your souls.

Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden is light'.

### **Tree Planting - a weeping cherry tree**

The tree reminds us of the reality of the abuse - it is based in reality, in the earth.

The tree has a few leaves that have turned colour - reminding us that seasons come and go, and while the tree will soon be bare, it will flower in Spring time, a sign of hope.

The tree represents the children, families and community that have been betrayed, but continue to have life and to grow.

Ultimately the tree is a sign of hope, of life -

For children to be safe and loved and cared for.

For families to feel confident that all adults will protect their children.

For our community to ensure all children and other vulnerable people are nurtured and kept safe in our midst.

### **Blessing of the Plaque**

The words on the plaque are:

In memory of children and families who have suffered as a result of sexual abuse in this parish, and as a pledge of our commitment to the healing process and to the safety of children, now and in the

future.

**Symbolic Action** - sprinkling with ashes/water/petals.

**Concluding Prayer**

When faced with great difficulty we can often be at a total loss for words.

But the Spirit of God can express even our sighs to the heart of God.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace

hear our cries of distress over the harm done to children in our parish, and their families.

Breathe wisdom into our prayers,

soothe restless hearts with hope,

steady shaken spirits with faith.

Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace, so that we may act with justice

and find peace in you.

May all people who come to visit this memorial tree at St Matthew's Church find a sense of peace and reflection and resolve.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**MC:** Thank you

**Closing hymn: 'Prayer of St Francis'**

Verse 1: Make me a channel of your peace

Where there is hatred let me bring your love

Where there is injury your pardon Lord

And where there's doubt true faith in you.

Verse 2: Make me a channel of your peace

Where there's despair in life let me bring hope

Where there is darkness, only light

And where there's sadness ever joy.

Oh Master grant that I may never seek

So much to be consoled as to console

To be understood as to understand

To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Verse 3: Make me a channel of your peace

It is pardoning that we are pardoned

In giving of ourselves that we receive

And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

If the prayer gathering today has raised any issues for you, please feel welcome to contact the following support agencies:

**Relationships Australia Canberra & Region** 6122 7190 or 1300 364 277

**CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn** 6295 4300

**Lifeline** (24 hours) 13 11 14

**Beyondblue** (24 hours) 1300 22 4636

A sheet with further contacts is available in the church foyer.