**MOHMV Wednesday Morning Lament, Healing and Hope**

**Gathering**

**Note: Use this document in collaboration with the PowerPoint presentation.**

**Leader: (4 mins)**

We gather together as one heart, though many different hearts.

We gather together as people from the west, the south, the north and the east of our nation; and from the west, the south, the north, the east of our world.

Many hearts come holding pain, anger, disillusionment and confusion.

Many come with sadness, shame and vulnerability.

Many come with heartache and resolve to raise our hearts, our voices and our hands to God.

However you come, we come together, invited to participate, as you are, in this experience of lament, healing and hope.

The world knows lament as a passionate expression of grief or sorrow, an expression of regret or disappointment about something. Lament is a time to mourn and repent, to lighten the burden of a heavy heart.

But, “the laments in Scripture do more than just voice painful emotions. The psalms of lament go further than just releasing pent-up emotions. They are more than mere catharsis. Within themselves, these psalms are a theology, a doxology, a form of worship.

They are reminders of truth. (pause)

They are exercises in faith. (pause)

They are transformative for the believer and there is much we can learn from them”.

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/way-lament/>

Lament has the potential to change a heart. It compels a search, strips the heart of pretence, and forces us to wrestle with God.

Our thoughts and prayers of lament today may be an opportunity for us to appeal for companionship in our own loss, or identify with the loss of others.

As such they can be the healing work of the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ and our thoughts and prayers of lament, shared with each other, can be a source of refuge and strength in the midst of our Heartache.

They invite us to grieve what has been lost or is out of order in our world.

Our lament shared here together gives us time and space to express and acknowledge our grief, our pain, our confusion, and even our anger; to offer each other strength and support in difficult times; to help us as we search to somehow make sense, individually and communally, to move forward with the task and challenge of life and help us discern with hope what is a good and proper response to any situation.

It is after we lament, after we face and express the pain and negativity that healing often begins.

In more theological terms, we can say that it is only by facing and going through the death that we can come to new life, to resurrection and in doing so, we become Easter people.

Our prayers of lament can prompt us to consider the will of God and, in contemplating the will of God, they provide a way forward, if we are prepared to listen for what we learn there; if we listen to what the Spirit is saying.

Lament opens the heart to wrestle with our God who knows that sorrow leads to comfort and lament moves to praise, as sure as the crucifixion gave way to resurrection.

This is the hidden hope in lament.

And so we begin…

***Lights off***

**Pope Francis clip up to the start of music. (2 mins)**

**Enya song begins and plays through the first 2 verses. (1 min 30 sec)**

**At start of verse 3 leaders starts to speak over Enya song playing softly in the background**. **(2 mins)**

**Leader:** In this sacred space we bring our hurts and sorrows – our laments.

You are invited, as you wish and are able, to listen to these voices shared and listen deeply to each other, some of us, with heavy hearts and broken spirits.

Today, here in this space we share some of our brokenness, our humanity, our vulnerability – as one people **we cry out to God.**

Today we bring stories from our hearts- to pour out, to sit with, to surrender in faith, hoping; (pause); trusting (pause) knowing (pause) our loving God is with us in our suffering.

I invite you to take your small glass heart now (pause) and hold it during this prayer and reflection as we remember that . . .

“Sometimes hearts need to break before they can heal” because out of the brokenness grows a greater capacity for love. (adapted from Petrea King). (finish speaking with Enya song at 3 mins 6 secs)

**First Story - Not Belonging.**

*At the end of telling their story the person(s) waits where they are until we sing Te Rogamos, Señor and then they walk towards the heart installation and place a heart at the foot/bottom of the heart installation.*

**Stories Read x 6**

**Reader 1:**

My faith is very simple—I love God, and I love attending Church. However, its relevance in the lives of so many is simply not there. My children do not attend Church anymore as they say there is no relevance and to a degree I agree with them. The main reason I attend Church is to feel close to my deceased mother. The rest seems irrelevant and I understand my children's views. After a break from going to Church recently due to my personal struggle with the church’s complicity in the abuse cover-up, I felt at home when I returned this past weekend. However, I still feel a separation from the actual celebration of the Mass.

**Reader 2:**

Girls and young women often see no relevance of the Church to their experience of daily life, including in the area of the place of women in the Church. They are educated to believe in the equality and complementary talents of men and women, and see only inconsistency in the teaching of the institutional Church in this area, particularly in the exclusion of women from leadership roles.

**Reader 3:**

The changes to the language of the liturgy in relatively recent times has caused me much concern. The fact that during the Eucharistic prayer the words are now ‘for many’ rather than ‘for all’ is hugely and negatively significant to me. Each time I hear those words I am reminded of the exclusion of so many people—myself included. Isn’t God about love? So why then, is such language being used?

**Reader 4:**

I have grown up in the church, as I child I was an alter server and heavily involved as was my mother. As a child the mass brought me comfort and warmth and a sense of community. However as I grew older I began to understand how fractured it has become. As I grew I formed my values shaped by my experience of the church and my parents. I also came to know myself as a bisexual feminist woman. And sadly when I came to know myself I no longer felt the sense of community in the church I once had. I no longer feel that it has a place for me. Which saddens me, as I still have faith, I still hold beliefs that come from my upbringing, and I am not the only person who feels this way

**Reader 5:**

I believe God is asking us to really think about relationships and looking after creation. With relationships, the bible tells the message we are all made in the image of God. We should move towards refreshing the rules. If the church was more open to these things, which are elements of real everyday life, I think attendance to church would increase. I'm not Catholic but work as a teacher in a Catholic primary and have done for more than 10 years. Many families do not attend church, yet send their children to Catholic schools. This should tell you something...people believe in their faith values but aren't drawn to be active in their church and local parish. I think it would immediately send a message of inclusivity and loving others. My understanding is this is what Jesus taught

**Reader 6:**

I have been shaped by being a student, Parent and teacher of Catholic education for 42 years. My experiences of the Church have been varied, however, they have become less positive over time. I have seen too much negativity, too much disrespect, too much entitlement, dis-empowerment, judgement and total disregard for people. While rites and rituals have a place, so does having compassion and temperance.

**Focus of our prayer**: For all whom our Church excludes and fails to be a place of belonging and an experience of God’s love. Let us recall those who feel abandoned by our Church and are not welcomed into the community based on your name.

**Scripture Reference**

Jesus knew the suffering of abandonment.

“When Peter was down below in the courtyard, one of the high priest’s servant girls came up. She saw Peter warming himself there, stared at him and said, ’You too were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.” But he denied it. “I do not know, I do not understand what you are talking about,” he said and he went into the forecourt. The servant girl saw him and again started telling the bystanders, ‘This fellow is one of them.’ But again he denied it. A little later the bystanders themselves said to Peter, ‘You are one of them for sure! Why, you are a Galilean.’ Be he started calling down curses on himself and swearing, “I do not know the man you speak of.” (Mark 14: 66-72.)

**We ask for help**

**Leader**: Loving God, we know that there are people who are excluded or abandoned by our church communities. We pray especially for those who do not find a sense of belonging or feel your love in our communities.

May we be people of true welcome, worship, healing and friendship for all.

We turn to you, recognising the need to tirelessly build a culture that does not polarise, is humble and curious, draws people close, and is open to all.

*At the end of telling their story the person(s) waits where they are until we begin to sing Te Rogamos, Señor and then they walk towards the heart installation and place a heart at the foot/bottom of the heart installation.*

**Response: Te Rogamos, Señor (1 mins)**

**Second story – Generational Impact of Trauma**

Video and Ravina’s response. (6 mins)

**Prayer Focus**: For our nation’s first peoples who continue to suffer humiliation and contempt from our systems, our governments and our society. Let us recall the sufferings endured by them throughout this nation’s colonial history and the intergenerational trauma many struggle to overcome.

**Scripture Reference**

Jesus knew suffering and trauma.

**46**Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last.

(Luke 23:46.) Repeat twice slowly with impact and wait after second time.

**We ask for help**

**Leader:** Loving God, we know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters suffer through injustices of the past and still today. We pray we may all work to achieve the reforms needed in Australia that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to take a rightful place in their traditional Lands and have power over their own destiny. Let us work together for a shared future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples flourish.

We turn to you, recognising the need to work for fair, truthful and right relationships for all people of Australia and the humility to recognise and embrace the gift of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples May we always act based on the practice of “Nothing about us without us”. “Make us the forethought not the afterthought”.

*At the end of telling their story the person(s) waits where they are until we sing Te Rogamos, Señor and then they walk towards the heart installation and place a heart at the foot/bottom of the heart installation.*

**Response: Te Rogamos, Señor**

**Third Story:** Institutional Child Sexual Abuse. (4 mins)

**Story is read:**

**Wife of a Survivor**

There’d always been comments made by his school friends when we were together, about Brother A. “Brother A was a paedophile - a creepy old demented brother – he used to touch boys.”

I didn’t know he’d been a victim of brother A until after we’d been married for a while and I didn’t know the full extent of the abuse until nearly 30 years into our marriage. He carried it hidden inside him.

He was a physio and we ran a practice, it was successful and life was good. Our three children were healthy, happy and thriving, our oldest child, a boy, was 9, turning 10 and then….it started to unravel.

We spiralled into merely surviving the next 13 years of our lives, 13 years of my husband’s untreated depression and all the consequences of that and all the time I didn’t know to do. He didn’t know what to do.

I thought it was me, I wasn’t good enough; I couldn’t help him feel alive again; I didn’t know how to restore his passion, his love of life, his love for himself, his self-worth. What kind of a partner can’t do that for the person she loves most in the world?

I felt like I was letting him down, letting us down, letting the kids down. He was suffering with PTSD and I didn’t realise. I didn’t know how deep the pain was, his or mine. I didn’t know I was seeing shame.

We worked hard to try to protect our kids from the consequences of the depression, from the effects of PTSD, from how differently life was to what we’d imagined our lives would be like…but we’ll never really know the full impact on them…. “Ongoing and intergenerational” is what the commission report says.

I lost my husband for 13 years and I didn’t know why. He retreated into himself and I didn’t understand why. And all the time he lived with shame and guilt; shame and guilt that should not have been his. He spent 13 years searching for answers and then on day, told his story.

My husband’s story of sexual abuse that happened at his Catholic school, when he was 9, turning 10; sexual abuse that continued for a whole year till the brother responsible was moved on. His story of having his vulnerability ripped away by a man who’d taken vows to be like Jesus. His vulnerability, trust and innocence ripped away by a religious brother who’d abused already in 2 other states and had been moved on. All this in a place that was supposed to be sacred.

He’s a lucky one, on the road to healing; a lucky one who found the strength to speak out and hold them to account, not just for himself but for all who suffered and continue to suffer. There are many.

We continue to deal with the demons, the attacks of PTSD.

The hardest thing from me is watching him suffer, knowing I can never take that away, I can never turn back the clock or give us back the time we lost – the 13 years when we just survived, didn’t live life.

Some days I’m so angry with our church; our church that should have been about promoting life to the full, not destroying life. I feel let down and disregarded. Some days I’m ashamed of being Catholic.

I still go to Mass; many times I wonder why… but these days I go alone and sometimes I sit in the pews and weep. At those times, I feel so alone! But I’m a lucky one, my husband survived, we’re rebuilding our lives and I’m so proud of my husband and the man he continues to be.

**Prayer Focus:** For those who have been betrayed and exploited by clergy, religious and laity in Catholic institutions. Let us lament the many lives tragically cut short by the indescribable pain of childhood abuse, the deep pain of those who have been unable to share their story and the sadness and distress of loved ones of victims who have been left to grieve, often with unanswered questions.

**Scripture Reference**

Jesus knew the suffering of betrayal.

“Having said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and declared, “I tell you most solemnly, one of you will betray me. It is the one,’ Jesus replied, ‘to whom I give the piece of bread that I shall dip in the dish,” He dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. “What you are going to do, do quickly.” As soon as Judas had taken the piece of bread he went out. (pause) Night had fallen.” (John 13: 21-22, 26-28, 30)

**We ask for help.**

**Leader:** Loving God, we stand with all those who, as vulnerable children, were abused, abandoned and violated, sexually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. We pray that as your church we do everything possible to support the victims with compassion and justice. We pray also that all those in positions of power in our Church, and all of us, accept ongoing responsibility to hear, believe and admit wrong doing.

We turn to you, recognising our responsibility to always act with integrity, to listen, be humble and to never forget.

*At the end of telling their story the person(s) waits where they are until we sing Te Rogamos, Señor and then they walk towards the heart installation and place a heart at the foot/bottom of the heart installation.*

**Response: Te Rogamos, Señor**

**Fourth Story – Our Own Lament (6 mins)**

**Experience of contemplative dialogue**

**Leader:** Today we come with vulnerable, open, heavy, broken, loving, compassionate hearts. Let us listen and contemplate for a short while. Listen, quietly, deeply, truthfully, courageously to what your heart is speaking in this moment.

**Contemplation Question - Listen to Heart - What do you lament?**

**Te Rogamos, Señor in instrumental playing in background. (2 mins)**

This place is a sacred place where we will now take time to listen deeply to each other as we are invited to share, as you feel appropriate for you, your feelings, your stories, your experiences; your laments, with the person beside you and in doing so, hold the dignity of each other.

I now invite you to share with the person beside you. (5 mins)

(Instrumental – flute- music plays to bring quiet to room again)

**Prayer Focus:** Our Prayer focus is our own lament.

**Leader:** By the honest recognition and confession of our human sameness we can participate in the care of God who came, not to the powerful but powerless, not to be apart from our humanity but with us, not to take our pain away but to share it.

**We ask for help.**

**Leader**: Spirit of wholeness, we are all affected by the hurts carried in our hearts that have been spoken today or remain unspoken. Inspire us to bear another’s burdens and advocate for human dignity and the common good. Help us be brave enough to speak prophetically in the public square to meet the challenges of our day. Fill our lives with new courage and help us to become a community where justice and love abound.

**Response: Te Rogamos, Señor.**

*At the end of telling their story the person(s) waits where they are until we sing Te Rogamos, Señor and then they walk towards the heart installation and place a heart at the foot/bottom of the heart installation.*

**Fifth Story - Risking Light**

Play Risking Light video. (8 mins)

**Prayer Focus: Living the paschal mystery**

We ponder the Paschal Mystery – the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. The deepest understanding of the Paschal Mystery can come to us in everyday life. Every life is formed with this same pattern. We all endure our own passions, deaths and resurrections many times in our lives.

**Leader:** Responding in trust we are today joined together through relationship, compassion and love, as Easter people, believing that “the hope of Easter Sunday can be born from the darkness of Good Friday.” (Richard Leonard, SJ. Reflections on Lent and Easter, p67). To lament together is to hold one another accountable to continue the pursuit of truth until joy dawns. Joy will dawn.

**We ask for help.**

**Leader:** Gracious God, filled with your divine presence help us to go forth with renewed courage to face life’s choices. May our eyes be open that we may learn stories from each other of how to care for one another. May our efforts to reach out in solidarity be signs of your solidarity with us.

**Te Rogamos, Señor.**

*At the end of telling their story the person(s) waits where they are until we sing Te Rogamos, Señor and then they walk towards the heart installation and place a heart at the foot/bottom of the heart installation.*

**Prayer of Turning toward the Risen Christ**. (2 mins)

**Leader:** For those whose dreams have been shattered,

**All:** may they turn toward restored hope.

Leader: For those who have grown weary from constant turmoil

All: may they turn toward peace.

Leader: For those who feel disheartened,

All: may they turn toward a spirit of encouragement.

Leader: For those who have stopped believing in happiness,

All: may they turn toward a reason to rejoice.

Leader: For those with faltering relationships,

All: may they turn toward a disposition of love.

Leader: For those who lack self-worth,

All: may they turn toward their imperishable goodness.

Leader: For those who are sorrowful,

All: may they turn toward you and find renewed gladness.

Leader: For those who suffer in body, mind or spirit,

All: may they turn toward healing.

Leader: For those in challenging transitions,

All: may they turn toward trust in your guidance.

Leader: For those troubled in their faith,

All: may they turn toward confidence in your love.

Leader: For those who feel burdened,

All: may they turn toward reliance on your strength.

Leader: For those seeking vengeance,

All: may they turn toward a heartfelt desire to forgive.

Leader: For those who doubt joy will ever arise,

All: may they turn toward your resurrection.

**Together:**

Risen Christ, we turn to you with full reliance on your resurrected presence with us here and now. We renew our trust in your grace to restore our joy when it lies hidden in our entombed self. Turn us again toward hope. Open our hearts to recognise you in the garden of our everyday life.

Amen.

“I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever” ([Ps. 86:12](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.%2086.12)).

**Response: Dolly’s song. The lights return to full at the beginning of Dolly singing her song. (2 mins)**

Nano Nagle poem. (1 min)

**One Pace Beyond**.

Take down your lantern from its niche and go out!

You may not rest in firelight certainties,

Secure from drifting of doubt and fear.

You may not build yourself confining walls

And say: “Thus far, and thus, and thus far shall I walk,

And these things shall I do, and nothing more.”

Go out! For need calls loudly in the winding lanes

And you must seek Christ there.

Your pilgrim heart

Shall urge you still one pace beyond,

And love shall be your lantern flame.

(M.Raphael Consedine, PBVM.)

(approx. 70 mins)