

Prayer Service for Those Who Suffer

Use this complete prayer service with Chapter 7 of Meeting Jesus in the Sacraments. You may also choose to use only individual parts of the prayer service.

Needs:

- slips of paper and pens for each student
- a decorative vase or bowl to put the slips of paper in
- (optional) an internet connection and computer queued to play *Abide with Me* by Matt Maher on YouTube) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIuC9-4aB7Q>
- copies as needed

Introduction

Leader: As we come together today, let us spend a moment bringing to mind those in our lives and in the world who suffer. In a few minutes we will have an opportunity to pray for these people.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord, we come before you today to pray for those in our lives and in our world who suffer. We know, Jesus, that you have a special love for those who suffer and are in pain. You healed those who came to you, wept for your friend Lazarus, and experienced suffering in your Passion and Death. We ask you to be with these people in their suffering to accompany them, heal them, and bring them the comfort of your presence. We place any pain we are experiencing in your hands, help us to offer our difficulties up in union with you. Amen

Scripture Reading

Reader: A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians (Phil 2:5–11),

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus,
Who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance
he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.
Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Guided Meditation

Leader: In this reading, which is believed to be a hymn from the early days of the Church, you hear about the great self-emptying of Christ. Christ, who understood completely what pain and suffering are when he died on the cross, is given to you as an example. How are you to imitate him? By sharing his same attitude toward suffering. Jesus did not go looking to be crucified, yet he also did not run from this horrific death sentence. He chose to accept this death and offer it as a prayer to the Father. You will probably not have to die in such a way, but you probably have experienced pain, suffering, annoyances, set-backs, and disappointments in life. When you have the attitude of Christ, patient acceptance of suffering and disappointments, you can bring about something good too. This is what the Church calls redemptive suffering—offering up difficulties in an attitude of intercessory prayer as a gift to God. When you choose redemptive suffering, God allows your prayers to bless others, to strengthen you, and to give encouragement to others who see you. (*Pass out slips of paper and pens.*)

At this time I would invite you to listen to this song called *Abide with Me* about God's presence with you in difficulties. Who in your life could use your prayers and sacrifices? Do you have a friend or family member who is struggling? Perhaps you would like to pray for a tragedy you have heard about in your community or in the world.

When you have thought of an intention of two, write them down on your slips of paper, bring them up, and put them in this jar of intentions. I will keep this jar in our classroom this week as a reminder of your intentions. Hopefully when you see it, you will be reminded that God can always bring about good through your own struggles when you choose to offer them up. When you see this jar of intentions you can offer up a prayer for your intentions and those of your classmates.

(Play the song Abide with Me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIuC9-4aB7Q> at this time allowing students to fill out the slips, bring them forward, and then sit quietly until the song ends.)

Leader: Lord Jesus, help us to have the same attitude as you do. Give us the strength to offer our difficulties up in union with your suffering on the Cross. Help our suffering become a means of consolation and salvation for others. Support us to see life's difficulties not as burdens, but as a way to come closer to you and be more deeply connected with others in need of our prayers.

All: Amen.