

Cardinal Wuerl Celebrates Mass to Begin Season of Healing for Survivors of Abuse in the Archdiocese of Washington

September 14, 2018

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington, celebrated Mass today at the Cathedral of Saint Matthew the Apostle in Washington. Earlier this month, the cardinal announced a six-week [“Season of Healing”](#) for the Archdiocese of Washington to begin on Friday, September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Calling it a first step in the necessary healing process for our Church, the cardinal invited parishes and parishioners of the archdiocese to come together in prayer, to give voice to the pain and suffering of the survivors of clergy sexual abuse, while also recognizing the pain and wound of the whole Church. The cardinal announced that he would celebrate a Penitential Mass to initiate this “Season” at St. Matthew’s Cathedral, the mother Church of the archdiocese. The work of healing will need to continue beyond the six weeks, the cardinal noted, but that the intention of the special time would be to call attention to our need to pray and to reach out to survivors of abuse throughout the year.

The [Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross](#), a reminder of Jesus's crucifixion and the gift of redemption that ultimately brings healing and peace. As the liturgical procession entered the sanctuary for Mass, the cardinal [prostrated himself before the altar](#), as he does at the liturgy on [Good Friday](#) when Christians remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus. This prostration is a ritual of recognition of failure and of contrition. In his opening remarks, Cardinal Wuerl prayed, "the healing we beg may touch all of us differently. I ask for healing out of my contrition for wounds that were caused by my bad judgments or failures."

In his [homily](#), the cardinal said the faithful turn to the cross as "the font of our healing" from the wounds of clergy abuse and the inadequate response of bishops to this sin. He said he hoped for transparency in Church leadership and engagement of lay people to help facilitate this healing. "We turn to the cross with those who have been so brutally abused," the cardinal said. "We join them in our outrage that this has happened. Perhaps our Lord can turn our anger into a commitment to work together to take meaningful actions to bring about a purification that is verified in deeds."

"Our need to move from the darkness of sin and failure – abuse and shame – into the light of the Cross has already been recognized in so many parishes across this archdiocese, and in this Mass initiating the season of healing, we join our priests, religious, and faithful laywomen and laymen in a collective and heartfelt prayer for the victims of abuse – the survivors," he said.

After the homily, [representatives of the survivors of abuse approached the sanctuary](#) where they joined the cardinal to light a candle to symbolize the beginning of hope, healing, and solidarity.