

## *Children Suffering From Abuse*

*Jesus said: 'Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for such is the kingdom of heaven'*  
(Matthew: 19.14)

### REFLECTION ONE



Catherine McAuley had a deep love and care for children, especially those who are most in need. She used her inheritance to establish a House of Mercy so that women and children would have a safe place to be and to grow. She has left us this legacy to continue. In recent times we have heard of abuses that have occurred in some places within the Catholic Church.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse will hold a hearing in April into the experiences of

children at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol, Queensland. The Orphanage was managed by the Sisters of Mercy until 1978.

In 1997, the Sisters of Mercy issued an unreserved public apology to the former residents of Neerkol.

In the words of Institute Leader, Sister Berneice Loch:

*'Since then we have continued to walk a journey of healing with the former Neerkol residents and hope that the Royal Commission is another important step on this journey. We acknowledge they were victims of physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual abuse and during April we encourage you to pray for them as they will again share their heartbreaking stories with enormous courage.'* Berneice continues; *'Please continue to pray for the victims, for all who will be impacted by the hearing and for those working on this important Royal Commission.'* May we all work towards *'protecting children and vulnerable people into the future.'*

### REFLECTION TWO

**We continue to pray for children who have suffered abuse.**

On 19 July 2008, in Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral, Pope Benedict XVI lamented that child sex abuse had taken place and the pain it caused. *"Here I would like to pause to acknowledge the shame which we have all felt as a result of the sexual abuse of minors by some clergy and religious*

*in this country. I am deeply sorry for the pain and suffering the victims have endured and I assure them that, as their pastor, I too share in their suffering”.*

In more recent times, Pope Francis asked for prayers that the church "*carry out, generously and thoroughly, our duty to humbly acknowledge and repair past injustices and to remain ever faithful in the work of protecting those closest to the heart of Jesus.*" (February 5, 2013)

*“In particular,” Pope Francis said, “I wish to express my compassion and to ensure my closeness in prayer to every victim of sexual abuse, and to their families; I ask you to continue to support them along the painful path of healing, that they have undertaken with courage.”* (Dec. 2, 2013)

On behalf of ISMAPNG, Sr Caroline Ryan RSM has written a prayer which you are encouraged to pray for the duration of the Royal Commission.

***PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION  
INTO INSTITUTIONAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE***

*Gracious God in Whom All Life is Sacred,*  
during these days  
as we are confronted by the disgrace of child sexual abuse,  
we pray for everyone who is concerned with  
the Royal Commission or  
affected by its work.

We commend to you  
all women and men who suffered abuse as children,  
the Commissioners and their associates;  
authorities who must answer to the Commission on behalf of their institutes;  
good people throughout Australia who are distressed  
that children have been so shamefully exploited;  
good people whose trust in your Church has been bruised and broken.

For each of these, loving God,  
as your Spirit of Justice is needed, may it prevail;  
as your Spirit of Truth is needed, may it enlighten and liberate;  
as your Spirit of Compassion is needed, may it be deeply experienced;  
as your Spirit of Hope is needed, may it change hearts and minds;  
as your Spirit of Healing is needed, may it restore and renew.

We make this prayer in company with Venerable Catherine McAuley,  
through Jesus in whom your Mercy became flesh and lived among us.  
Amen

Written by Caroline Ryan RSM on behalf of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea  
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