

Jesus, Healer of Wounds and Source of Mercy

by Tom Grenchik

The recent *Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America* was an unprecedented gathering. Led by 155 bishops, over 3,200 Catholic leaders attended from 159 dioceses and over 200 national Catholic organizations, apostolates, and movements. Inspired by *Evangelii gaudium*, the Convocation equipped and re-energized leaders to share the Gospel as missionary disciples.

One special moment set the tone for honest conversations throughout the Convocation—the Sunday evening of adoration and reflection: “Encountering Jesus, Healer of Wounds and Source of Mercy.”

Introducing the reflection, Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas shared: “We pause to pray and reflect together on both our wounds and the ways that we, as individuals and as Church, have participated in or failed to prevent the woundedness of others.” Seán Cardinal O’Malley of Boston led the devotion, which included a Litany of Sorrow based on the five wounds of Christ. Five specific areas were addressed.

The Scandal of Clergy Sexual Abuse

Bishop Flores prayed to Jesus, Healer of Wounds and Source of Mercy: “*We implore you to heal the hearts of all those who have been wounded by the evil of sexual abuse, especially within the Church. We pray that your Divine Mercy will move to repentance all those who, in any way, have contributed to this evil by their actions or inactions. Prompt the Church to acknowledge its failures in protecting children in the past and the loss of trust that has resulted. May we never again forget our responsibility to protect the children in the care of the Church.*”

A Lack of Respect for Human Dignity

An African American leader prayed for a profound respect for the dignity of every human life: “*Awaken in us an acknowledgement of the multitude of ways in which human dignity is threatened—with abortion and assisted suicide, on death row, in abusive homes, and amid racial or ethnic discrimination.*”

Selfish Disregard of the Common Good

A young refugee prayed that Jesus would cleanse us of our disregard for others: “*Help us to promote peace in war-torn lands, to assist refugees, to seek justice for the poor who suffer each day from homelessness, hunger, and hopelessness, and to protect the beauty of your Creation which sustains us all.*”

Suffering from Participation in Abortion

A diocesan Project Rachel director offered the intention for the millions of women and men in our nation who are wounded from their participation in abortions: “*Help us as a Church to recognize the unique pain that abortion brings to individuals, families, and our society.*”

The Hurt We Have Individually Caused Others

A leader from the National Catholic Partnership on Disability prayed for Jesus to help us acknowledge all the hurt we have ever caused ourselves or others through our thoughts, words, actions, inaction, or times when we excluded others: “*Grant us the grace to sincerely repent of our sins. Fill us with your overflowing love and mercy that will enable us to serve as your loving hands and faithful*

disciples who proclaim your gospel throughout the world with great joy.”

From sins of commission to sins of omission, from excluding persons to racism, from sexual abuse to not addressing domestic violence, from abortion to turning our backs on the inconvenient, as this litany indicates, we needed to begin the Convocation by acknowledging our failures and seeking forgiveness. Thankfully, there were many opportunities for the Sacrament of Confession throughout the course of the Convocation

That grace, and the overflowing love of Jesus, Healer of Wounds and Source of Mercy, made all the difference in making the Convocation an authentic moment of healing for the Church in America.

Tom Grenchik is the executive director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Learn about the bishops' pro-life activities at www.usccb.org/prolife.