



MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF
THE DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Prime Minister Scott Morrison will deliver a *National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse*, this coming Monday, 22 October 2018. The *National Apology*, to be delivered at Parliament House in Canberra, will acknowledge the appalling abuse perpetrated on vulnerable children by the very people who were supposed to care for them, including members of our Church.

At a recent diocesan conference on *Creating a Safe Church from Within*, Mr John Crowley—headmaster at St Patrick's College in Ballarat—gave a heartfelt reflection. He addressed the importance of us, as the Church, openly and honestly acknowledging the hurt that has been caused. John said, "This acknowledgement must, above all else, avoid the use of the word, 'but'. Why? Because a genuine acknowledgement opens and prepares our hearts to truly hear the voices of those victims and survivors deeply wounded by our Church. Most profoundly, without it there can be no trust. Without trust, how can hope exist?"

It is true that words can be hopelessly inadequate if not accompanied by effective action. Our faith assures us that if our actions are grounded in an openness to God's grace, they can produce the fruit that we and the whole of society so desperately want to see.

So, as we join together as a nation to say sorry, I invite you, as followers of Christ, to pray with me this prayer of healing and hope.

PRAYER OF HEALING AND HOPE

Loving God

We pray for our brothers and sisters who have been abused within our Church. We acknowledge their unending strength: their boldness has been an immense gift. We pray they find justice, peace and healing.

We pray for our community: that we accept and nurture each other during this time.

Empower us to be a positive and supportive force within society. Help us to witness the love of God for all.

Help us to acknowledge and make amends for past wrongs. Give us the strength to be true advocates for the wronged and vulnerable.

May the grace of God guide us now and always. We offer this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Yours in Christ



Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD
Bishop of Wollongong

