

A LITURGY

After a Child's Meltdown

ANDREW ROYCROFT

Lord, as this present storm subsides,
as we process our own agitated emotions,
even our exasperation at this meltdown,
help us to breathe out again.

Soften this wounded hush into readiness
to hear your voice,
to show your mercy,
to offer your grace,
to model your love.

All-seeing God, the hurt we feel
is not unknown to you.
Jesus, great High Priest, you
are not unsympathetic to our distress.
Blessed Holy Spirit, who brooded
over formless ruin, come to us
with your creative peace.

We bring our child to you now
overtaken by emotion,
overwhelmed with frustration.
Calm them, we pray.
Root them ever more deeply
in our unconditional love.
Steady their ragged breathing
and raging thoughts.

Blossom their budded fists
into opened hands.

Where gospel conviction would lead them
to your grace—our grace—let it do its work.
Where harmful guilt would drive them
to the brink, draw them back.
Let your love shown through us become
their safe place, their nearest shore.

Thank you for the gift of our
relationship with _____. Thank you
that our love gives them a sheltered space
in which they can express their heart,
their fears, their hurts and confusion,
rather than choking those emotions
down till they become a quiet
poison in their veins. Help us
to be steady for them in such
moments, not reacting abruptly or
unpredictably from our own old
wounds—even when we feel overwhelmed
by this child's outburst.

We bring ourselves to you, O Christ.

We are sinners.

We have raged against others in the past.

We have raged against you.

Forgive us.

O Lord, we confess our failure
in our handling of these circumstances.

A MOMENT OF QUIET REFLECTION AND REPENTANCE MAY BE OBSERVED.

Where we have spoken to our child
with unbridled tongue, cleanse us, and
re-season our speech with grace.
Lord give us the courage to confess our sin
to our child without justification or reservation.
Help us to mean our repentance; help us
to model it for them.

In the present chaos of these emotions,
remind us of your covenant,
and help us to embody that same love
to our child today.

O Lord, as our child will come to us
conscious of what they have done,
cautious of our response,
enable us to stand with open arms
in the path that our child takes home,
to welcome them,
help them,
teach them,
and guide them.

Take us beyond the symptoms of this meltdown
and lead us to what is really the matter.
May this present stress serve over time
to strengthen our bonds of love.
Help us to walk in the way of the cross
and let your reconciling power be at work here.

O Lord, help us!
Work your gospel into this moment.
Grant that I and my child would not only
experience recovery through these hours,
but that together we would discover
your redemptive grace
in new and healing ways,
knitting our hearts even more
closely than they were
before this flare of emotion.

Amen.