



When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence against Women

Tenth Anniversary Edition A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

In the beginning, I was young . . . he was handsome. He said I was beautiful, smart, worthy of love . . . made me feel that way. And so we were married, walking joyfully together down a church aisle, our union blessed by God.

Then came the angry words . . . the verbal tearing apart. . . . Now I was made to feel ugly, unintelligent, unworthy of any love, God's or man's.

Next came the beatings . . . unrelenting violence . . . unceasing pain. I shouldn't stay, but this is my husband . . . promised forever. He says I deserve it . . . maybe I do . . . if I could just be good. I feel so alone . . . doesn't God hear me when I cry out silently as I lie in bed each night?

Finally came the release, the realization. It's not me . . . it's him. . . . I am worthy of love, God's and man's. One spring morning, my heart was filled with hope and with fear now only of starting over on my own. And so again I walked . . . down the hallway of our apartment building . . . never again to be silent . . . never again to live with that kind of violence, to suffer that kind of pain.
—A battered wife¹

Introduction

As pastors of the Catholic Church in the United States, we state as clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is *never* justified. Violence in any form"—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal"—is sinful; often, it is a crime as well. We have called for a moral revolution to replace a culture of violence. We acknowledge that violence has many forms, many causes, and many victims—men as well as women.²

The Catholic Church teaches that violence against another person in

any form fails to treat that person as someone worthy of love. Instead, it treats the person as an object to be used. When violence occurs within a sacramental marriage, the abused spouse may question, "How do these violent acts relate to my promise to take my spouse for better or for worse?" The person being assaulted needs to know that acting to end the abuse does not violate the marriage promises. While violence can be directed towards men, it tends to harm women and children more.

In 1992 we spoke out against domestic violence. We called on the Christian community to work vigorously against it. Since then, many dioceses, parishes, and organizations have made domestic violence a priority issue. We commend and encourage these efforts.

In this update of our 1992 statement, we again express our desire to offer the Church's resources to both the women who are abused and the men who abuse. Both groups need Jesus' strength and healing.³

We focus here on violence against women, since 85 percent of the victims of reported cases of non-lethal domestic violence are women.⁴ Women's greatest risk of violence comes from intimate partners—a current or former husband or boyfriend.⁵

Violence against women in the home has serious repercussions for children. Over 50 percent of men who abuse their wives also beat their children.⁶ Children who grow up in violent homes are more likely to develop alcohol and drug addictions and to become abusers themselves.⁷ The stage is set for a cycle of violence that may continue from generation to generation.

The Church can help break this cycle. Many abused women seek help first from the Church because they see it as a safe place. Even if their abusers isolate them from other social contacts, they may still allow them to go to church. Recognizing the critical role that the Church can play, we address this statement to several audiences:

- To women who are victims of violence and who may need the Church's help to break out of their pain and isolation;
- To pastors, parish personnel, and educators, who are often the first responders for abused women;
- To men who abuse and may not know how to break out of the cycle of violence; and
- To society, which has made some strides towards recognizing the extent of domestic violence against women.

We recognize that violence against women has many dimensions. This statement is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather to be an introduction, along with some practical suggestions of what dioceses and parishes can do now.

An Overview of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is any kind of behavior that a person uses to control an intimate partner through fear and intimidation. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, and economic abuse. Some examples of domestic abuse include battering, name-calling and insults, threats to kill or harm one's partner or children, destruction of property, marital rape, and forced sterilization or abortion.⁸

Younger, unmarried women are at greatest risk for domestic violence. According to a U.S. government survey, 53 percent of victims were abused by a current or former girlfriend or boyfriend. One-third of all victims were abused by a spouse, while 14 percent said that the offender was an ex-spouse. Women ages 16 to 24 are nearly three times as vulnerable to attacks by intimate partners as those in other age groups; abuse victims between ages 35 and 49 run the highest risk of being killed.⁹

While abuse cuts across all ethnic and economic backgrounds, some women face particular obstacles. Women of color may not view the criminal justice system as a source of help. Additionally, in some cultures women feel pressured to keep problems within the home and to keep the family together at all costs. Some fear that they will lose face in the community if they leave. Immigrant women often lack familiarity with the language and legal systems of this country. Their abusers may threaten them with deportation.

Women in rural communities may find themselves with fewer resources. The isolation imposed by distance and lack of transportation can aggravate their situation. Isolation can also be a factor for women who do not work outside the home. They may have less access to financial resources and to information about domestic violence. Women with disabilities and elderly women are also particularly vulnerable to violence.

Some who suffer from domestic violence are also victims of stalking, which includes following a person, making harassing phone calls, and vandalizing property. Eight percent of women in the United States have been stalked at some time in their lives, and more than one

million are stalked annually.¹⁰ Stalking is a unique crime because stalkers are obsessed with controlling their victims' actions and feelings. A victim can experience extreme stress, rage, depression, and an inability to trust anyone.

Domestic violence is often shrouded in silence. People outside the family hesitate to interfere, even when they suspect abuse is occurring. Many times even extended family denies that abuse exists, out of loyalty to the abuser and in order to protect the image of the family. Some people still argue—mistakenly—that intervention by outside sources endangers the sanctity of the home. Yet abuse and assault are no less serious when they occur within a family. Even when domestic violence is reported, sometimes there are failures to protect victims adequately or to punish perpetrators.

Why Men Batter

Domestic violence is learned behavior. Men who batter learn to abuse through observation, experience, and reinforcement. They believe that they have a right to use violence; they are also rewarded, that is, their behavior gives them power and control over their partner.

Abusive men come from all economic classes, races, religions, and occupations. The batterer may be a "good provider" and a respected member of his church and community. While there is no one type, men who abuse share some common characteristics. They tend to be extremely jealous, possessive, and easily angered. A man may fly into a rage because his spouse called her mother too often or because she didn't take the car in for servicing. Many try to isolate their partners by limiting their contact with family and friends.

Typically, abusive men deny that the abuse is happening, or they minimize it. They often blame their abusive behavior on someone or something other than themselves. They tell their partner, "You made me do this."

Many abusive men hold a view of women as inferior. Their conversation and language reveal their attitude towards a woman's place in society. Many believe that men are meant to dominate and control women.

Alcohol and drugs are often associated with domestic violence, but they do not cause it. An abusive man who drinks or uses drugs has

two distinct problems: substance abuse and violence. Both must be treated.

Why Women Stay

Women stay with men who abuse them primarily out of fear. Some fear that they will lose their children. Many believe that they cannot support themselves, much less their children.

When the first violent act occurs, the woman is likely to be incredulous. She believes her abuser when he apologizes and promises that it will not happen again. When it does—repeatedly—many women believe that if they just act differently they can stop the abuse. They may be ashamed to admit that the man they love is terrorizing them. Some cannot admit or realize that they are battered women. Others have endured trauma and suffer from battered woman syndrome.

REMEMBER: *Some battered women run a high risk of being killed when they leave their abuser or seek help from the legal system. It is important to be honest with women about the risks involved. If a woman decides to leave, she needs to have a safety plan, including the names and phone numbers of shelters and programs. Some victims may choose to stay at this time because it seems safer. Ultimately, abused women must make their own decisions about staying or leaving.*

The Church Responds to Domestic Violence

Scripture and Church Teachings

Religion can be either a resource or a roadblock for battered women. As a resource, it encourages women to resist mistreatment. As a roadblock, its misinterpretation can contribute to the victim's self-blame and suffering and to the abuser's rationalizations.

Abused women often say, "I can't leave this relationship. The Bible says it would be wrong." Abusive men often say, "The Bible says my wife should be submissive to me." They take the biblical text and distort it to support their right to batter.

As bishops, we condemn the use of the Bible to support abusive behavior in any form. A correct reading of Scripture leads people to an understanding of the equal dignity of men and women and to relationships based on mutuality and love. Beginning with Genesis, Scripture teaches that women and men are created in God's image.

Jesus himself always respected the human dignity of women. Pope John Paul II reminds us that "Christ's way of acting, the Gospel of his words and deeds, is a consistent protest against whatever offends the dignity of women."¹¹

Men who abuse often use Ephesians 5:22, taken out of context, to justify their behavior, but the passage (v. 21-33) refers to the mutual submission of husband and wife out of love for Christ. Husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church.

Men who batter also cite Scripture to insist that their victims forgive them (see, for example, Mt 6:9-15). A victim then feels guilty if she cannot do so. Forgiveness, however, does not mean forgetting the abuse or pretending that it did not happen. Neither is possible. Forgiveness is not permission to repeat the abuse. Rather, forgiveness means that the victim decides to let go of the experience and move on with greater insight and conviction not to tolerate abuse of any kind again.

An abused woman may see her suffering as just punishment for a past deed for which she feels guilty. She may try to explain suffering by saying that it is "God's will" or "part of God's plan for my life" or "God's way of teaching me a lesson." This image of a harsh, cruel God runs contrary to the biblical image of a kind, merciful, and loving God. Jesus went out of his way to help suffering women. Think of the woman with the hemorrhage (Mk 5:25-34) or the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:1-11). God promises to be present to us in our suffering, even when it is unjust.

Finally, we emphasize that no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage. Some abused women believe that church teaching on the permanence of marriage requires them to stay in an abusive relationship. They may hesitate to seek a separation or divorce. They may fear that they cannot re-marry in the Church. Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage. We encourage abused persons who have divorced to investigate the possibility of seeking an annulment. An annulment, which determines that the marriage bond is not valid, can frequently open the door to healing.

First Responders: Priests, Deacons, and Lay Ministers

Many church ministers want to help abused women but worry that they are not experts on domestic violence. Clergy may hesitate to preach about domestic violence because they are unsure what to do if

an abused woman approaches them for help.

We ask them to keep in mind that intervention by church ministers has three goals, in the following order:

1. Safety for the victim and children;
2. Accountability for the abuser; and
3. Restoration of the relationship (if possible), or mourning over the loss of the relationship.

We also encourage church ministers to see themselves as "first responders" who

- Listen to and believe the victim's story,
- Help her to assess the danger to herself and her children, and
- Refer her to counseling and other specialized services.

Church ministers should become familiar with and follow the reporting requirements of their state. Many professionals who deal with vulnerable people are required to report suspected crimes, which may include domestic abuse.

In dealing with people who abuse, church ministers need to hold them accountable for their behavior. They can support the abusive person as he seeks specialized counseling to change his abusive behavior. Couple counseling is not appropriate and can endanger the victim's safety.

What You Can Do to Help

We offer the following practical suggestions for several audiences.

For Abused Women

- Begin to believe that you are not alone and that help is available for you and your children.
- Talk in confidence to someone you trust: a relative, friend, parish priest, deacon, religious sister or brother, or lay minister.
- If you choose to stay in the situation, at least for now, set up a plan of action to ensure your safety. This includes hiding car key, personal documents and some money in a safe place and locating somewhere to go in an emergency.
- Find out about resources in your area that offer help to battered women and their children. The phone book lists numbers to call

in your local area. Your diocesan Catholic Charities office or family life office can help. Catholic Charities often has qualified counselors on staff and can provide emergency assistance and other kinds of help.

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides crisis intervention and referrals to local service providers. Call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224 (TTY). E-mail assistance is available at ndvh@ndvh.org. In some communities, cell phones programmed to 911 are made available to abused women.

For Men Who Abuse

- Admit that the abuse is your problem, not your partner's, and have the manly courage to seek help. Begin to believe that you can change your behavior if you choose to do so.
- Be willing to reach out for help. Talk to someone you trust who can help you evaluate the situation. Contact Catholic Charities or other church or community agencies for the name of a program for abusers.
- Keep in mind that the Church is available to help you. Part of the mission Jesus entrusted to us is to offer healing when it is needed. Contact your parish.
- Find alternative ways to act when you become frustrated or angry. Talk to other men who have overcome abusive behavior. Find out what they did and how they did it.

For Pastors and Pastoral Staff

Make your parish a safe place where abused women and abusive men can come for help. Here are some specific suggestions:

- Include information about domestic violence and local resources in parish bulletins and newsletters and on websites.
- Place copies of this brochure and/or other information, including local telephone numbers for assistance about domestic violence, in the women's restroom(s).
- Keep an updated list of resources for abused women. This can be a project for the parish pastoral council, social justice committee, or women's group.
- Find a staff person or volunteer who is willing to receive in-depth training on domestic violence; ask this person to serve as a resource and to help educate others about abuse.
- Provide training on domestic violence to all church ministers, including priests, deacons and lay ministers. When possible,

- provide opportunities for them to hear directly from victims of violence.
- Join in the national observance of October as "Domestic Violence Awareness Month." Dedicate at least one weekend that month to inform parishioners about domestic abuse. During that month, make available educational and training programs in order to sensitize men and women, girls and boys to the personal and social effects of violence in the family. Help them to see how psychological abuse may escalate over time. Teach them how to communicate without violence.

Use liturgies to draw attention to violence and abuse. Here are some specific suggestions:

- In homilies, include a reference to domestic violence when appropriate. Just a mention of domestic violence lets abused women know that someone cares. Describe what abuse is so that women begin to recognize and name what is happening to them. Watch the video *When You Preach, Remember Me* (see **Resources**).
- In parish reconciliation services, identify violence against women as a sin.
- Include intercessions for victims of abuse, people who abuse people, and those who work with them.
- If you suspect abuse, ask direct questions. Ask the woman if she is being hit or hurt at home. Carefully evaluate her response. Some women do not realize they are being abused, or they lie to protect their spouses. Be careful not to say anything that will bolster her belief that it is her fault and that she must change her behavior.
- Have an action plan in place to follow if an abused woman calls on you for help. This includes knowing how and where to refer her for help. This will be easier if you have already established contact with local shelters and domestic violence agencies.
- Include a discussion of domestic violence in marriage preparation sessions. If violence has already begun in the relationship, it will only escalate after marriage.
- In baptismal preparation programs, be alert that the arrival of a child and its attendant stress may increase the risk of domestic violence.

When I Call for Help: A Prayer

One source of healing we have in our lives as Christians is prayer. Psalm 55 may be an especially apt prayer for women who are dealing with abusive situations. With all of you we pray these verses:

Listen, God, to my prayer;
do not hide from my pleading;
hear me and give answer.

If an enemy had reviled me,
that I could bear;
If my foe had viewed me with contempt,
from that I could hide.
But it was you, my other self,
my comrade and friend,
You, whose company I enjoyed,
at whose side I walked
in procession in the house of God.

But I will call upon God,
and the Lord will save me.
At dusk, dawn, and noon
I will grieve and complain,
and my prayer will be heard.
(Ps 55:2-3, 13-15, 17-18)

Notes

¹ Excerpted from "When Home is Where the Hurt Is," *Christopher News Notes*, no. 326.

² *Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action. A Pastoral Message of the U.S. Catholic Bishops* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994).

³ See Pope John Paul II, Encyclical letter *The Gospel of Life* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995), nos. 2, 23, and 99.

⁴ National Crime Victimization Survey, 1992-1996. www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm.

⁵ Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women, Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey (November 2000). www.ncjrs.org.

⁶ "Developments in the Law—Legal Responses to Domestic Violence," *Harvard Law Review* 106 (1993):7: 1608-9. Cited in Carol J. Adams, *Woman-Battering* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 22. In 1995 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) addressed one form of child abuse: child sexual abuse in a home or family setting. See *Walk in the Light: A Pastoral Response to Child Sexual Abuse* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995).

⁷ www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm.

⁸ In regard to sexual abuse, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000), no. 2356; *The Gospel of Life*, nos. 3, 23 and 99; and Pope John Paul II's "Letter to Women no. 5, and "Welcome to Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the Fourth World Conference on Women," no. 7, in *Pope John Paul II on The Genius of Women* (Washington, D.C.:

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997). In regard to verbal abuse, see *Catechism* nos. 2477, 2479, 2482-2487, and 2507-2509.

⁹ U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-99" (NCJ-187635). www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/ipva99.htm.

¹⁰ "Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey," Joint report from the National Institute of Justice and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (April 1998).

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women (Mulieris Dignitatem)*, no. 15.

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DIOCESAN RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: Report from a Survey of U.S. Dioceses July 2008

Between March and June, 2008, the Bishops' Committee for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth surveyed all dioceses to learn about programs and activities they have undertaken to address domestic violence. Thirty-five arch/dioceses responded to the survey. This report tabulates the data and includes comments from respondents. Questions may be directed to Sheila Garcia, Associate Director, Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, at 202-541-3041 or sgarcia@usccb.org.

1. What have been specific responses to date of the diocese to domestic violence? Please check all that apply.

Links to Community Resources (e.g. safe houses, counseling)	31
Clergy Education	21
Victim Advocacy	19
Observance of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month	17
Abuser Intervention Programs	13
Distribution of Preaching Helps	11
Victim Support Groups	11
Informational Display	11
Educational Forum	7
Seminary Workshops	5
<i>(Total= 34)</i>	

Comments:

"Some parishes have developed a parish based initiative called Hope Ministry that trains parishioners to listen and to connect persons who may suffer from abuse to resources in the community."

"Retreats for couples integrating spirituality, social sciences and feminine movement reflection."

"Workshop trainings for pastoral ministers (in addition to clergy) create support ministries in each parish is our goal."

"Third edition of a comprehensive domestic violence pastoral response resource manual; victim referrals for legal assistance, shelters, pastoral counseling; day of reflection for survivors of abuse; interdenominational prayer service for victims and survivors of abuse"

"Website information; pamphlets for engaged couples and new parents."

"Catholic schools and the Diocesan media library were provided with copies of prevention curriculums. Discussion and activities designed to educate children and youth in "right relationships" and "what to do if something isn't right in a relationship" were integrated into religious education curriculum as part of the Safe Environment program for children and youth. Victim Assistance Coordinators appointed in response to the Charter for the Protection of Children have been made available as a resource individuals victimized by any type of abuse, including intimate partner abuse, as a source of support and identification of community resources."

"Some training for marriage preparation mentor couples"

"Victims receive outpatient counseling services at six sites around the diocese."

"...assistance with workplace policies on domestic violence"

"A resource binder, containing information on community resources in various areas of the Diocese, was assembled and distributed to each parish in the Diocese by the Office of Family Life. In March 2008, the

Diocesan Women's Commission hosted an annual conference, at which domestic violence was one of the topics. This was addressed by a representative of the Police Department's task force on domestic violence."

"In addition to the clergy, education on domestic violence was presented to: Family Life leaders, many lay leaders of some deaneries, parish secretaries, some Youth Directors, some DREs, Youth and Young Adult parishioners on dating violence, and immigrant leaders."

"Counseling and referral for victims and perpetrators."

"Cooperation with various community programs: Empty Places at the Table, Isaiah Project, Silent Witnesses. ISAIAH Faith in Democracy: Renewing the Promise gathering, State Department of Health Prevention of Sexual Violence plan, Dating Violence- there are four groups of teens to speak to both public and private schools around the state."

"When the diocese puts together its annual youth rally, the staff always includes a service project. In the past one of the service projects directly benefited a domestic violence agency in the parish community that helped host this event. Household and personal care items for mothers and children who need emergency shelter, were collected to be donated to the abuse shelter. In addition, a representative from that agency gave a presentation to the youth and adults who were present, indicating the importance of outreach to families in need of support in times of domestic violence. Several local ecumenical clergy associations in our diocese, in collaboration with local law enforcement and social service agencies, provide vouchers for meals, travel and lodging to people in need. Although these networks are not specifically set up for domestic violence victims per se, often times mothers and children needing immediate refuge, food, or transportation to safety, are certainly part of that outreach."

2. Who has been involved in the implementation of the response? Please check all that apply.

Diocesan Offices

30

Most respondents listed more than one Diocesan Office; most listed were the

Family Life Office, or equivalent (14) and Catholic Charities (10). Other

responses included Social Concerns/Catholic Social Services (5), Child Protection (3), Youth/Young Adult Ministry (3), Continuing Education For Clergy (3), and the Diocesan Tribunal (2.)

Diocese in Partnership with Community Organizations	21
Parishes in Partnership with Community Organizations	15
Diocesan Bishop	12
Parish Staff	10
Catholic Advocacy Group(s) Not Connected with Diocese or Parishes	6
Diocesan Women's Commission	5
Seminary Faculty	3
Auxiliary Bishop	2
<i>(Total= 34)</i>	
Diocesan Offices or Other Comments	35

Comments:

"Education: Non-archdiocesan providers: Good Shepherd Services--services to the Vietnamese community, Caminar Latino--(not self-identified as Catholic but located on a parish property)--services to Hispanic community."

"One of our Youth Ministry programs works with youth to maintain the garden at the local shelter - as they work they teach healthy relationship concepts though discussion and activities. Their program is called "Hands for Growing." Another parish obtained a mini-grant a number of years ago to offer prevention programs ("Quit It" "Bully Proof" "Reaching and Teaching Teens.." and "Love All That and More") within their parish - In fact, our diocesan mini-grant proposal was modeled after their program."

"When I call for Help" was presented to community organizations that the diocese worked with. "

"The Council of Catholic Women in [our] Diocese has created the "Healing the Wounds" brochure which is used nationally and creates opportunities for communities to provide local resources. The Council affiliates in parishes often support shelters through their Family Concerns, and Community Concerns Commissions. Hope Community Center, an outreach to the Farmworkers Ministry offers a 15 week

parenting program that addresses Domestic Violence and its impact on children. The center also has three Americore volunteers that assist at a shelter for victims of Domestic Violence and volunteer lawyers that work with immigrants that have been victims of Domestic Violence. St. Rita Ministry at Holy Family Parish supports Harbor House, a shelter for domestic abuse victims, through fund raising and outreach programs. St. Rita Ministry was also involved in creating awareness of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week."

"We work with Bill Degnan who works with the Probation Office. He trains people involved in ministry on the topics of healing and reducing violence. He works with seminarians, Youth Group Leaders. I participated in a Conference of awareness raising at the local state college."

**3. To whom has the response of your diocese been directed?
Please check all that apply.**

Parishioners at large	23
Clergy	22
Victims: Intimate Partners and Children Impacted by Domestic Violence	20
Parish Staff	17
Victims: Intimate Partners	16
Diocesan Staff	15
Perpetrators	9
<i>(Total=34)</i>	
Other (please specify)	11

Comments:

"Our approach is to attempt first to save the couple if it is possible, without putting the victim at risk."

"Engaged couples & preparing clergy; new parents (baptism preparation.)"

"Catholic Charities employs a bi-lingual therapist providing counseling to victims of crime and other individual/family issues. Through

Immigration & Legal Services Division staff work with victims of crime to obtain legal residency. T-visa VVWA."

"Victim Assistance posters were placed in men's and women's restrooms in parishes, schools, and diocesan offices to increase confidentiality and accessibility of the information to victims who may not otherwise have independent access to the resources. Victim assistance posters were made more general to include all types of abuse. Posters were printed in English and Spanish and a bilingual victim assistance coordinator joined the other volunteer VACs."

"Family Life leaders, Sponsor couples ministering to the engaged, other Marriage Preparation programs, Youth and Young Adult leaders, some deacons."

"Counselors and Social Workers."

4. To what extent has the USCCB Pastoral Letter "When I Call For Help" (1992, 2002) influenced your diocese's response to the reality of domestic violence? Please check the most appropriate.

Very Much	10
Somewhat	10
Moderately	9
Minimally	9
<i>(Total =34)</i>	

Comments:

"The Bishops' letter provides a theological foundation and authority which is important."

"It has provided us with a different avenue to reach clients we were already serving or trying to serve and a new way to speak to priests about how they can intervene."

"It was the impetus for our response and a most useful resource."

"Great Resource. Much of our work is focused on the goal of the Bishops' statement, and now we can implement its goal at a diocesan & parish level."

"The pastoral letter's and clear, forceful message from the bishops that violence against intimate partners is never tolerated has brought a dark secret into the light of Gospel truth (not distortion)."

"A clear message from the Bishops offering hope and freedom for those trapped in domestic violence."

"We had many efforts in motion before I was introduced to the document, as part of our efforts to prevent abuse of children through teaching right relationships, however, we have definitely made use of the document and find it to be a powerful resource that validates our commitment."

"Our diocese feels a Catholic response is warranted to ensure that anyone experiencing these tragic events is directed to appropriate interventions. The diocese has attempted to educate and inform the various target groups about the realities of domestic violence. Our diocese continues to network with various community agencies that provide expertise and services for those experiencing domestic violence."

"Our Diocesan Youth Director has developed 2 special formation programs that include awareness of domestic violence issues. Catholic Charities, Caritas Counseling Service, provides court mandated anger management and this deals to a large extent with domestic violence. The staff of Caritas does an annual training on the impact of domestic violence on children."

"The Archbishop wrote an article in our newspaper, "People of God," indicating the importance of eradicating domestic violence. "When I Call for Help" pastoral letter was distributed at meetings and workshops. Our local Catholic Radio, interviewed Sheila Garcia and Bishop Ramirez on the reality and sad effects of domestic violence." "The Signs of Abuse card has been very well received by pastors. We are now including info from the card on a poster designed for women's restrooms regarding this and other women's issues."

"I use it when I speak to the seminarians or perhaps a St. Vincent de Paul conference."

5. Is there any initiative or program that you wish your diocese would sponsor or support as a response to domestic violence?

(Total responses= 30)

Comments:

"In partnership with our local Self-Help counselor, we have prepared a retreat for victims. We attempted grant funding but failed. I would still like to see this happen."

"I feel there is a need of an archdiocesan reflection team that meets regularly towards creating a response to domestic violence issues in marriage and families. The Church has the responsibility to reflect (re-think) domestic violence issues from the faith point of view and not be satisfied with what secular groups are offering as the one and only response."

"Yearly response to healing for victims & their families (Catholic) but also including our voice to interfaith organizations."

"Give domestic violence a higher profile in ministry formation (priest, deacon and lay minister) and in marriage preparation efforts."

"Crisis Hotline. Crisis Counseling"

"We would like to expand and improve our efforts in the area of prevention through educating children and youth in right relationships - stressing how scripture and Catholic doctrine support and guide us in having healthy relationships. At this time our victim outreach is limited to providing support through clergy and victim assistance coordinators and referring individuals to existing programs in the community. We may have parishes that would be interested in offering further outreach or support group interventions in a Catholic setting."

"Something more global - perhaps if there is an updated document?"

"Better support for the victims of abuse and their families."

"Pastors and Parish Pastoral Councils need to take more initiative in addressing this issue. This was made clear at our recent Women's

Commission Conference, when participants commented that they do not hear anything said in their parishes about this.”

“Reaching out to the children of domestic violence victims. Seminarian and deacon candidates education on domestic violence. Help for the perpetrators. Establishing a protocol in situations when a domestic violence victim approaches the church. (Updating the clergy and lay leaders on the devastation of domestic violence. Establishing a protocol in situations when a domestic violence victim approaches the church for help. Further assistance to the immigrant victims of domestic violence, including the Asian community)”

“To encourage observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October in parishes of diocese, by offering presentations, resource information, and homily helps for pastors.”

“More should be done on the parish level.”

“Easy to implement small group resources.”

6. Do you think there is interest in the diocese in obtaining further resources for responding as Catholics to domestic violence?

Yes	28
I do not know	6
No	3
<i>(Total=40)</i>	

Comments:

“We need a Catholic focus scripturally and sacramentally. We use other professionally done video resources, e.g. Center for Prevention of Sexual & Domestic Violence, that are not Catholic. At times I think there is inappropriate or slanted negative, implied criticism of our Church, which, in truth does the very best teaching based on the dignity of the human person.”

“There is interest in people and families affected by domestic violence. A response created by the Catholic Church, not from someone else and accepted by the Church performe.”

"Each diocese should respond individually to their faith communities, but all dioceses should also join together with one common goal - unite voices against domestic violence."

"Yes, the response I received from clergy, diocesan staff and parishioners as I met with them was quite positive. I have been approached by parish staff who have requested additional information and stressed the great need in both our English and Spanish speaking parish populations. We receive regular notices from community programs re: educational and collaborative workshops. We forward them to our parishes, schools and programs and have had individuals (clergy, pastoral ministers, youth ministers) continually express interest in attending."

"Possibly, but I am not sure it is seen as high priority."

"Additional funding earmarked specifically for victims of domestic abuse to be able to offer free counseling as well as help with housing and other services vital to their well being."

"No, the diocese has taken the necessary steps to ensure that a Catholic response to domestic violence has been implemented. Awareness of this important issue and its impact has been disseminated throughout the diocese, and intervention networking with community providers established."

"I would like to have the document used in all formation programs."

"More literature and other resources. Re-iterating the misinterpretation of scriptures. More resources to help the victim and their children after leaving the shelter. Reminding the victims frequently that they are made to God's image and likeness. More attention to all of cultural backgrounds including the Asian and Native American families."

"Not on an archdiocesan level but I would like them."

7. Please enter any further thoughts you have about a Catholic response to domestic violence.

(Total responses= 17)

Comments:

"We have found it helpful to have a canon lawyer from the tribunal explain that the marriage covenant is broken when abuse exists. I think we need to do a lot to educate clergy and the Catholic community that the marriage covenant is broken when there is abuse."

"I do believe partnership with local Family Violence & Sexual Assault prevention programs is key."

"A good number of women as well men affected by domestic violence don't want to leave the relationship. They will rather look for a solution to the problem and continue with the relationship. An important component in helping families and couples is the faith component. We can not ignore it anymore."

"Create curriculum for seminarians and pastoral ministers in responding to violence **from the pulpit** to the pews. Clergy should not be afraid to preach about domestic violence, and follow up with the support network in the parish."

"I believe that there are two additional populations who are prone to become victims of violence and that the Catholic Church and our bishops should address: teenagers (both male and female) and the elderly. The rising incidence of date rape and violence perpetrated against friends, videotaped and posted on Internet teen sites (e.g. the recent incident with cheerleaders in Florida) is very troubling and needs attention. Additionally, the aging of the large cohort of baby boomers who require care will bring increased incidents of physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse of the elderly, often at the hands of family caregivers."

"The training was immensely helpful to me in increasing my awareness of domestic violence and those affected, addressing in marriage preparation, making referrals for several women caught in violence. This continues to be a hidden problem. Clergy and pastoral ministers need assistance in when and how to make effective referrals as well as encouragement to speak about the issue regularly and knowledgeably."

"Good marketing materials would help - materials in addition to tapes. Thank you for fostering this important awareness and prevention effort."

"Prevention of abuse of any kind falls within our core beliefs regarding respecting life, promoting human dignity, and living the Gospel message to "love our neighbors as ourselves." Educating children and youth in right relationships and how to seek help when a relationship "isn't right" is central to our efforts to prevent all types of abuse. An emphasis on these concepts in all we do with children makes sense (as opposed to separate, compartmentalized efforts and programs) and seems something to strive for as we evaluate best practices."

"In the diocese there is a need for domestic violence programs with a faith perspective that target immigrant women and children because the church is their primary support system. Their faith is their only resource. The Domestic Violence Program Coordinator for El Centro advised [us] that women have told her that 'the most powerful moment was when a priest came and blessed them and said that Jesus doesn't want that for you.' She said that in Mexico they tell women who are abused 'this is your cross.' Now they are hearing from a priest that 'Christ died for us to liberate us...not to have us carry his cross for him.'"

"Designating a specific Sunday in the month of October for Domestic Abuse Awareness and sending a complete packet of materials that would include homily helps, intercessory prayers, etc. (similar to the packet of resources sent by USCCB for Catechetical Sunday)."

"For approximately 12 years, the Archdiocese has had a mass for victims and survivors of violence. This mass is usually celebrated by the local archbishop with a reception for the victims and survivors of violence. The mass is usually held on the fifth Sunday in Lent. We also provide prayer cards and literature to our Catholic community and the local community at large."

"[Catholic Charities] provides safe housing & shelter, civil legal services, sexual assault training services, transitional housing, operates the Family Justice Center, and runs the Supervised Visitation Center."

"1. Re-iterating that leaving the abusive spouse is not a sin and is not against the church teaching. 2. Circulate "When I Call for Help," and Bishop Ramirez's pastoral letters on domestic violence entitled, "Speaking the Unspeakable," and "Speaking for Those Who Have No Voice." 3. Mention the fact that although they are the minority, men can also be domestic violence victims. 4. Lobby for tougher laws against domestic violence."

“When the original letter was released, we initiated several components, i.e., workshops, etc. and again in 2000 we re-evaluated our response & added to & revised it. It is good this has surfaced again as a reminder to again re-evaluate our response. Thank you!”

<http://www.usccb.org/laity/women/violence/survey.shtml>