



## Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference

### A resource for 16 days of Activism: How can we help to end violence in Catholic families?

#### **Opening Prayer: (Source: SACBC 2020 Lenten Reflection and prayers on non-violence)**

God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong, always present, and always just: You gave your only Son to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace, join to your own suffering the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind, and spirit by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters who have been gravely harmed, and the cries of those who love them. Soothe their restless hearts with hope, steady their shaken spirits with faith. Grant them justice for their cause enlightened by your truth.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts, heal your people's wounds and transform brokenness into wholeness. Grant us the courage and wisdom, humility and grace, to act with justice. Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors. Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

#### **Brief Explanation: What is Domestic Violence? (Source: How can we help to end violence in Catholic families by Dr Chistauria Welland)**

Domestic violence is behavior by a spouse, intimate partner, or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, and psychological abuse and controlling behaviors. It is also called intimate partner violence, to distinguish it from other kinds of abuse that happen in a domestic setting, but in this booklet we will use the term *domestic violence* throughout, as it is in common use.

#### **Types of domestic violence:**

- **Physical abuse:** hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, scratching, use of a weapon, etc.
- **Sexual abuse:** violent rape, coerced sexual relations, any unwanted sexual behavior
- **Emotional abuse:** insults, name-calling, mind-games, putdowns
- **Economic abuse:** denying access and information regarding finances, taking property and money spouse earns, spending household money on alcohol and drugs and depriving the family
- **Controlling Behaviors and Social Isolation:** not allowing the spouse (or children) to be in contact with family, friends, and associates; not allowing spouse to work or better family situation. Keeping spouse in the house against their will; imprisonment.
- **Intimidation:** threats to hurt or kill the spouse, to kill oneself if spouse tries to leave, to report her/him to authorities if undocumented; threats against the children.
- **Religious abuse:** misusing Catholic teaching or Scripture to justify domination and abuse; forcing the spouse to practice your faith, or denying her/him the freedom to practice her/his own faith.



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- **Male privilege:** speaking and acting with expressions of male superiority and failure to accept the equality of men and women before God; treating the spouse like a servant and an object (including for sex).
- **Child Abuse:** In this case, the intention is to hurt the child, or sometimes stepchild, in order to hurt the spouse. It can include threats to take the child away from the other parent or actual abduction of the child.

### ***What are the short and long term effects of domestic violence on the person who suffers it?***

#### ***Some possible effects on the victims:***

- Death
- Injuries as a direct result of the physical violence
- Adverse health outcomes through chronic stress
- Chronic pain syndromes
- Migraines and headaches, etc.
- Children might be injured during violent incidents

### ***Physical violence is typically accompanied by emotional or psychological abuse.***

Domestic violence often leads to various psychological consequences, for example:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Suicidal thoughts or behavior
- Inability to trust others
- Sleep disturbances
- Flashbacks
- Ineffective parenting

### ***What are the short and long-term effects of domestic violence on children who are exposed to it in their family?***

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Aggression
- Refusal to go to school or failure at school.
- Affects cognitive and emotional development.
- Constant toxic stress produces damaging neurochemical changes, which can lead to problems in learning, health, building friendships, and responding to challenges.
- Exposed children are more likely to be violent or to become victims of domestic violence in their families as adults.

### ***What are the short and long term effects of domestic violence on the person who commit it?***

- Incarceration
- Loss of employment
- Increased abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Isolation and depression
- Loss of love and trust of family
- Distance in relationship with children
- Existential diminishment
- Distance in relationship with God



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### ***What are our Church leaders saying on violence against women and children?***

*“Despite our impressive constitution that embraces plurality and equality between men and women, gender and power relations are still skewed in favour of men. The prevalence of patriarchal practices in all spheres of human interaction and media discourse shows that women are still not being treated as equals. Male chauvinism, misogynistic tendencies and stereotypes about women are a social pathology that still haunts our country. The collective upshot of these toxic day-to-day practices amplified through public institutions and media discourse offer justification for female subordination and oppression by men” (Bishop Victor Phalana, Chairperson, SACBC Justice and Peace Commission)*

*“If we want a peaceful world, we should have peaceful families. If we want peaceful families, we should have men and women who have peace in their hearts. We want the peace of Christ to break out in our hearts. Peace is a precious gift from God, which must be promoted and protected” (Pope Francis, 1st September 2017).*

*“Increasingly, our society looks to violent measures to deal with some of our most difficult social problems -- millions of abortions to address problem pregnancies. We are tragically turning to violence in the search for quick and easy answers to complex human problems. Just as clearly, a nation destroying more than one and a half million unborn children every year contributes to the pervasive culture of violence in our nation” (US Catholic bishops, Confronting the culture of violence, 1994).*

*“Today our families need peace. One can build peace with three little things, humility, gentleness and patience, which are the attitudes of Jesus who is humble, meek and forgives everything. I invite Christians to start putting into practice humility, gentleness and patience saying this is the path to making peace and consolidating unity” (Pope Francis, 26 October 2018).*

*“The path to the attainment of peace is above all that of respect for human life in all its many aspects, beginning with its conception, through its development and up to its natural end. True peacemakers, then, are those who love, defend and promote human life in all its dimensions, personal, communitarian and transcendent. Life in its fullness is the height of peace. Anyone who loves peace cannot tolerate attacks and crimes against life” (Pope Benedict, 1st January 2013).*

### ***Examination of the conscience: (Source: SACBC 2020 Lenten Reflection and prayers on non-violence)***

Since Christ wants us to “walk in the newness of life” (Romans 6:4), what is the newness of life that our Lord calls me to experience in my life in relation to the following issues:

- Abortion
- Reluctance to believe in the respect for human life from the moment of conception to the end of natural life;
- Believing that women are inferior to men;
- Believing that women are to blame for incidents of rape;
- Believing that it is alright to be an absent father to one’s children;
- Believing that to be a real man, one has to be aggressive and violent;



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- Believing that it is alright when it is a woman who is violent to a man;
  - Believing in the use of violence to solve the relationship problems in my family;
  - Not doing enough to address deterioration of family life and family values;
  - Being a husband or wife who is involved in emotional abuse;
  - Being a husband or wife who is involved in economic abuse
  - Being involved in sexual harassment at work;
  - Excessive jealousy and deep sense of insecurity which translates into emotional abuse and violence against my husband or my wife
  - Being involved in a relationship of a blesser and a blessee;
  - Being a child who does not respect his or her parents;
  - Pornography and not respecting the dignity of women as subjects created in the image of God.
  - Being involved in human trafficking and child trafficking;
- ✚ What is the change of heart and change of mind that God is calling me to make in relation to these issues?
- ✚ In relation to these issues, what changes is God asking me to make in my behavior and in my life so that I become closer to Christ?

### **Intercessions: (Source: Prayer for use on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2019. Australian Catholic Bishops Conference)**

God of love, compassion and healing, we pray to you for the elimination of violence against Women and children in our communities:

- For women and girls who have experienced violent relationships, that they can find safety and healing from their trauma, and rebuild their lives;
- For children who have witnessed violence in their homes against their mothers and sisters and other family members, that they will experience healing and hope;
- For indigenous women and refugee women who have been impacted by extreme violence, that deep and lasting change will ensure their safety;
- For individuals and organizations working to prevent violence against women and girls and help survivors of violence, that their courage and generosity will endure;
- For men who speak out against forms of expression that demean women or condone violence against them, that their voices will grow stronger;
- For the men and boys who have behaved violently towards women and girls that they will have a change of heart, repent in meaningful ways, and seek whatever help they need to lead changed lives.

God of love, we commend these prayers to you and for your compassion to flood the hearts of all people. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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### What can we do to take end violence in Catholic families?

- **Listen:** Be open to learning from others who have more expertise and experience before you speak, think: have you really listened?
- **Believe:** Believe survivors and those who have been affected by gender based violence. Hear their truths and support their stance.
- **Speak out:** Join the conversation and use your voice to speak out against domestic violence. We all have role to play in ending violence.
- **Intervene:** If you see someone being threatened or assaulted find a safe way to help.
- **Act:** Giving your time to an organization or group that works to prevent and address domestic violence. Be the change you want to see and take on a leadership role within your community.