



WHEN THERE IS VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY



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PAX IN FAMILIA

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**IF AN ENEMY HAD
REVILED ME,
THAT I COULD BEAR. PSALM 55**





ENOUGH!

How much violence is directed against women! Enough! To hurt a woman is to insult God, who from a woman took on our humanity.

Pope Francis, Jan. 1, 2022





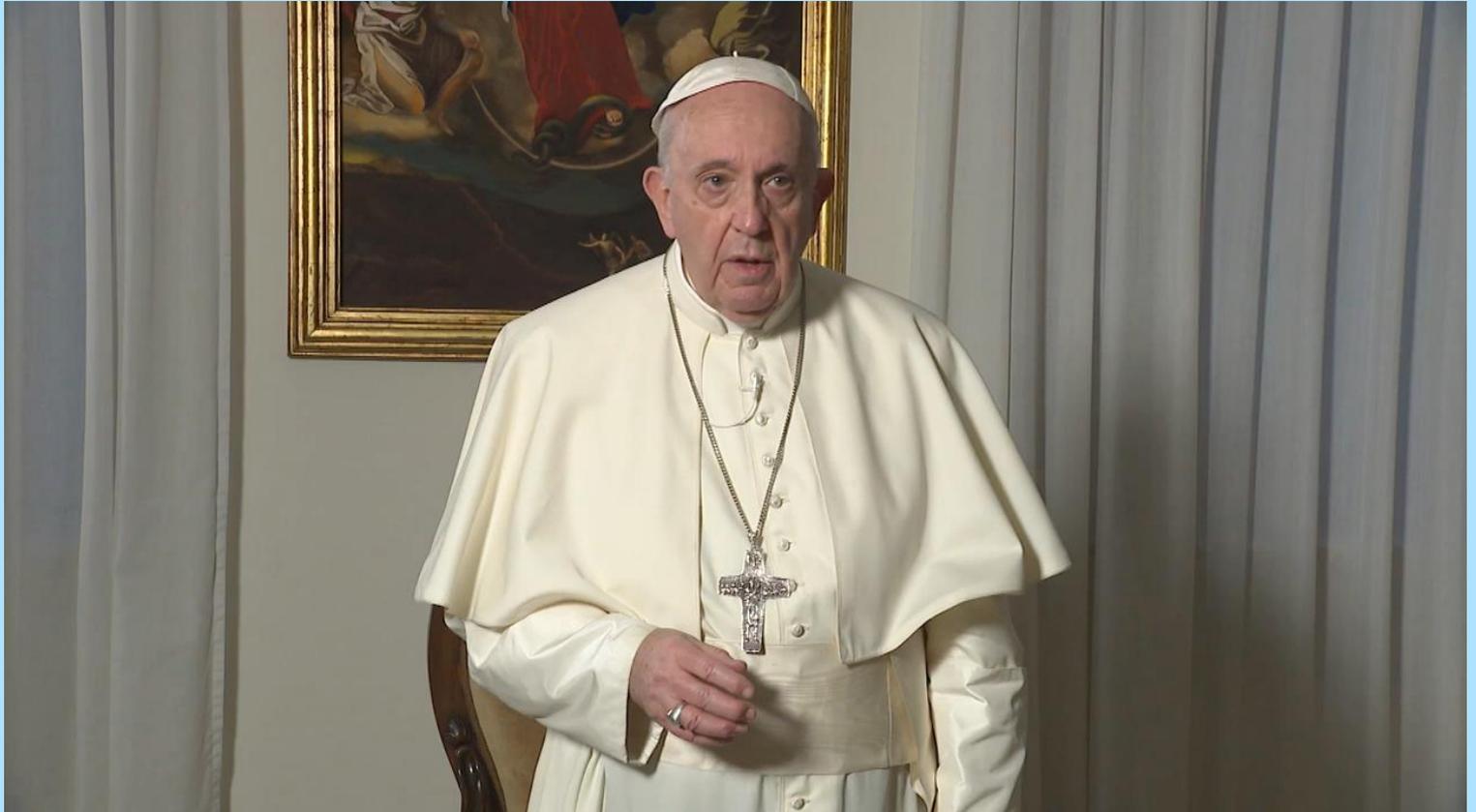
POPE FRANCIS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, FEBRUARY 2021

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIQ9v0WZFc4>



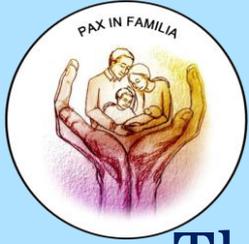
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LET US CALL UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT!





This is Michael Akong reporting from the 2022 WMOF from the Vatican. Today we report on the alarming increases of violence in the family especially in the current pandemic, now going on three years.

We have a special guest with expertise in family violence, Dr. Christauria Welland-Akong. She has a doctorate in psychology with 25 years in the field of domestic violence, in addition to 50 years as a catechist. Dr. Welland, can you tell us how serious domestic violence is and if it also affects Catholic families?



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A PANDEMIC!



Violence against women is a **global problem of pandemic proportions**, affecting one in three or 30% of women in their lifetime.

World Health Organization,
2021



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A PANDEMIC!

Violence against women causes devastating harm to women's lives and that of their children.

World Health Organization, 2020



SOMETIMES, IT LEADS TO DEATH

Osinachi Nwachukwu was a Nigerian gospel singer who was allegedly murdered by her husband in April 2022.

Their pastor had convinced her not to leave the marriage, and to forgive her husband and be reconciled on many occasions.





But Catholic families can't be affected by violence in the same way, right?



NOT IN CATHOLIC FAMILIES?

Studies show that there is no difference in the rate of domestic violence among Catholics than among people in the general population.

So yes, there is lots of violence in Catholic families too. And among Catholic teens and dating partners.





**So, how many Catholic
women specifically
experience
domestic violence?**



STATISTICS ON CATHOLICS

There were over **500 million Catholic women** age 15 and above in 2020.

If we apply the global average of domestic violence of 30%, that comes to **over 150 million Catholic women who have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their life.**

If we lower that to 25%, to account for the lack of firm domestic violence data for Catholics, that is **still more than 125 million women!**

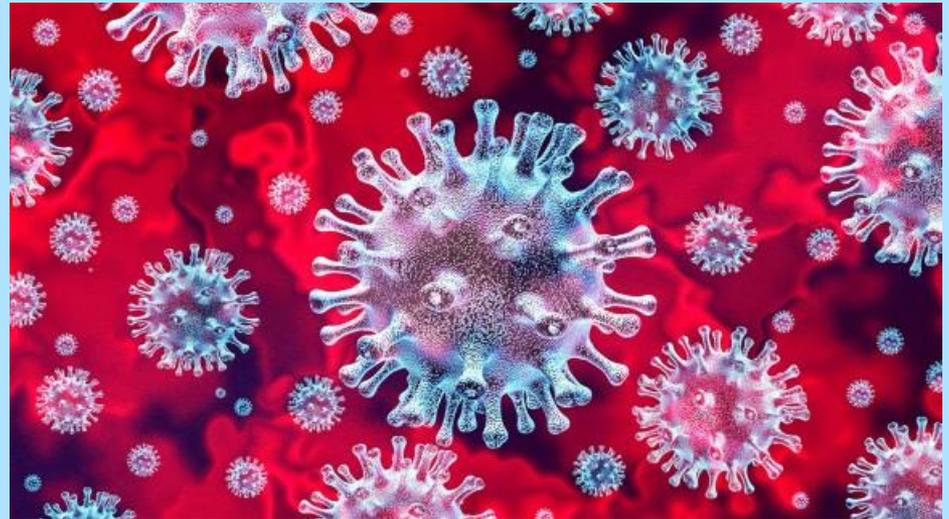


Has the coronavirus pandemic had any effect on violence against women?



THE CORONAVIRUS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The coronavirus has increased domestic violence worldwide. There are increases in emotional, family, financial, and employment stress, alcohol abuse as a coping strategy, and sales and use of firearms. Both incidents of violence and deaths have increased worldwide.





**Domestic violence could
mean many things!
Can do you define it more
specifically?**



WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence refers to behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner, male or female, that causes harm and can include:

Physical aggression

Sexual coercion

Psychological abuse

Economic abuse, and

Controlling behaviors - WHO, 2016, 2021





ALL WOMEN ARE AT RISK!





ALL ARE AT RISK!

Violence can happen to any woman, in any country – regardless of culture, religion or economic status.

In countries where women have less equality, there is a higher prevalence of violence against women.



What do Jesus and the Church teach about marriage?



IN THE CATHOLIC CATECHISM, WHAT IS THE DIVINE PLAN FOR MARRIAGE? IT IS MEANT TO BE A COMMUNION OF LIFE AND LOVE!

It seems that domestic violence violates God's plan for the family!





So, as pastoral agents how do we even begin to approach this vast problem?



WE'LL USE THE SEE, JUDGE, & ACT APPROACH

THE FIRST STEP is to **SEE** and learn:

**What are the facts about domestic violence
worldwide, including in Catholic families?**



JUDGE

THE SECOND STEP is to ask and discern, or judge:

How can we learn more about domestic violence among Catholics, and apply Catholic Social Teaching?



ACT!

THE THIRD STEP, part 1:

What can and should we do to respond **in the now** to the immediate needs of abused women, their children, and the men who abuse?



ACT!

THE THIRD STEP, part 2

What can and should we do to **address the root causes** of domestic violence?

Understanding these will lead to **violence prevention strategies.**



So as pastoral agents, what indications might you notice that could be warning signs of violence in a family?



ONE WARNING SIGN

As Fr. Charles Dahm of the Archdiocese of Chicago teaches, if a woman asks to speak to a priest outside of confession, **it is very likely she is seeking counsel because she is experiencing domestic violence.**



SOME WARNING SIGNS

For all pastoral agents, notice if the woman is silent in the presence of her husband, shows fear of her partner, has bruises, or wears long sleeves in all weather. You may come upon her weeping alone in the church.

Notice if her husband is being openly controlling or abusive, if their children are failing at school, showing anxiety or depression, or are being aggressive themselves.



ONE OF MANY RISK FACTORS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- In over 50% of cases, alcohol is involved in domestic violence incidents





Can you tell us some of the effects that domestic violence can have on women?



EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON ABUSED WOMEN

- Death, or
- Physical and sexual injuries
- Disability / chronic health conditions
- Miscarriage and abortion
- Depression
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Suicidal ideation/behavior
- Inability to parent effectively







SOCIAL EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Experiencing domestic violence also puts women and their children at greater risk of:

- Increased poverty
- Homelessness
- Sexual & labor exploitation/being trafficked
- Potentially fatal sexually transmitted infections, e.g., HIV/AIDS





IN MY THIRST, THEY GAVE ME VINEGAR TO DRINK





Does witnessing violence affect children?



THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN ARE MANY AND DEVASTATING





BE CAREFUL!!

CHILDREN NEED LOVE AND SAFETY!

CHILDREN DO NOT NEED TO BE EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE!!







TERROR, SADNESS, HELPLESSNESS





CHILDREN SEE, CHILDREN DO

What parents model to their children has the most influence in a child's life, including when it comes to transmitting violence and abuse down the generations.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOrGsB4qG_w



CHILDREN SEE, CHILDREN DO





Since violence is a huge problem in our Catholic families, how are the teachings of the Magisterium guiding us towards a pastoral response?



ST. JOHN PAUL II'S TEACHING ON LOVE AND EQUALITY

- In his document *Familiaris Consortio*, he teaches:
- Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.
- In *Mulieris Dignitatis*, he teaches that men and women are equal before God.





POPE FRANCIS HAS STATED THAT CHRIST'S TEACHING ON WOMEN CHANGED HISTORY

- Christ's "doctrine on women" changed history," because up to that moment, the woman was "second class..."
- **The woman before Jesus is one thing; the woman after Jesus is another.**
- Jesus dignified woman and put her on the same level as man.
- **Both are 'the image and likeness of God,' both;**
- **not men first and then women a bit lower.**
- **No, both."**



JESUS SHOWED LOVE & RESPECT TO WOMEN

We all know the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke's gospel.

What if the assaulted person in his parable had been a woman?

AS JESUS SAID, GO AND DO LIKEWISE.





IN AMORIS LAETITIA, POPE FRANCIS SPEAKS CLEARLY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- Unacceptable customs still need to be eliminated...
- The verbal, physical, and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages **contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union.**

Amoris Laetitia, 2016, #54





JESUS SAID. “YOU DID IT TO ME” MT. 25,40

As Pope Francis teaches,

If we dare to go to the fringes, we will find him there; **Jesus is already there, in the hearts of our brothers and sisters, in their wounded flesh, in their troubles and in their profound desolation.**

Gaudete et Exsultate, 135 (2018)







CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- For 2000 years, the Church has reached out to the sick, the injured, and those who are oppressed, not fearing to stand up for the poorest and the most neglected.
- **Those who suffer domestic violence are some of these people.**
- Are we to ignore or minimize the needs of women who suffer because the violence is in their marriage and family?



Should we be concerned about those 125+ million Catholic women and their families?

Is there a way to integrate the current state of knowledge about domestic violence with the teachings of the Church, and then come up with an action plan for pastoral agents?



YES, THERE IS A WAY! SO, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

**Everyone has a part
to play!**

- Bishops
- Priests
- Seminarians
- Religious
- Family Life ministers
- Educators
- Catechists
- Parents
- Youth





THE SOUTH AFRICAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION, IN THEIR LETTER OF JUNE 2020 WROTE:

**“We as Church have contributed to this
scourge through our denial, our silence, our
resistance and our lack of preparation.
Forgive us”.**



IN PREPARATION FOR THE SYNOD IN 2023

Some recent research from Catholic Charities and Catholics for Family Peace in the USA shows that today, as in the past, **the priest is still the first person** that many Catholic victims of domestic violence approach to seek counsel and help.

However, priests are **often unaware of the available resources.**

Thus, the importance of priests being educated on this topic.





A FEW FIRST STEPS FOR ALL

- **Get educated about domestic violence, including in the Magisterium!**
- **Listen to those involved and learn.**
- **Know your local resources.**
- **Respond & accompany with the love of Jesus.**
- **Teach & share your knowledge.**
- **Help to prevent violence in Catholic homes and schools.**



FROM THE USCCB'S PASTORAL FRAMEWORK FROM 2021, WRITING ON RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

EDUCATE . . . The faithful on Church teaching about the dignity of each person made in the image of God.

ENCOURAGE . . . Those who use violence, as well as families and victims, to seek resources and support.



PASTORAL FRAMEWORK USCCB, 2021

ENGAGE... by offering:

- Spiritual and material support for victims
- Trainings
- Lists of resources



Having a plan to intervene in the moment is really important, but is there a way to prevent domestic violence in the first place?



PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND PROMOTING EQUALITY ARE TOP PRIORITIES OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION





WHAT ARE SOME PREVENTION STRATEGIES?

We can use research-based practices to teach violence prevention strategies, and we can also incorporate the riches of our faith and spirituality into these teachings.



**WE CAN HELP PREVENT DATING
VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE!**

**WE CAN HELP PREVENT ALL
INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE!**



**Is it better to organize
a pastoral response in a
grassroots or top-down manner?**



GRASSROOTS COWORKERS IN FAMILY PEACE!

We recognize two such
couples in our midst:

**Therese and Jean
Emmanuel from Cameroun.**



**Alfredo & Marina Davila,
from Ecuador**





TOP-DOWN IS ALSO IMPORTANT!

We also recognize the vital importance of large scale, long-term interventions.

The **government** plays a vital role, as can the **Church**, at the level of

- the Vatican,
- Episcopal Conferences, and
- Dioceses.



If you could speak to the Holy Father about this problem, what more would you ask him to do?



FIRST, I WOULD THANK HIS HOLINESS IN THE NAME OF ALL WOMEN, CHILDREN AND MEN FOR HIS TEACHINGS AND HIS LOVING CONCERN!

I would ask him to establish an international Commission and Center at the Vatican to conduct deeper studies, and to educate clergy, religious and the laity on:

- Compassionate & effective pastoral responses to domestic violence.
- To establish violence prevention strategies in all Catholic evangelization and catechesis, at every stage of life.
- To extend this to every Diocese and parish in the world.



WE ASK THIS THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY FAMILY:

JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH, HEAR OUR PRAYER





Thank you, Dr. Welland, for your experience and expertise in this sensitive and important topic, and thanks to all of you for your attention!

This is Michael Akong signing off for now, and asking the Lord for peace and love in all the families in the world afflicted by domestic violence!