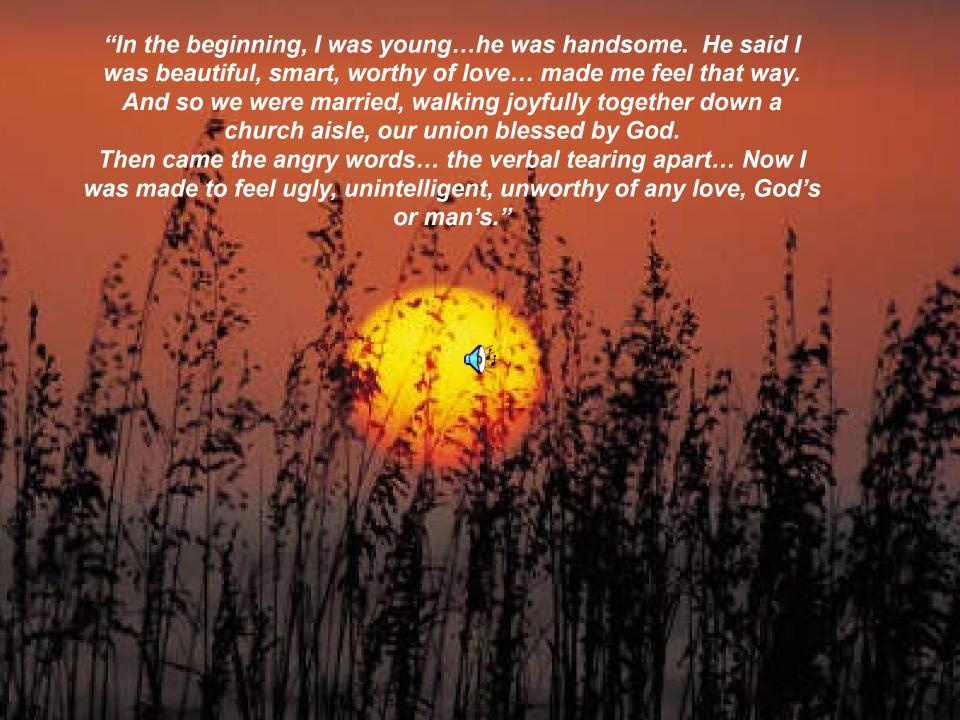


"When I Call for Help"

A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women



A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops



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.
- Examples include battering, name calling and insults, threats to kill or harm one's partner or children, marital rape, or forced abortion.

"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?"

An Overview of Domestic Violence (Cont'd)

WHY MEN BATTER

- Men who abuse generally share some common characteristics. They tend to be jealous, possessive and easily angered.
- Hold a view of women as inferior
- Alcohol and Drugs

WHY WOMEN STAY

Fear: for themselves, for their children, fear that they cannot support themselves

Religion: Resource or Roadblock?

 As a resource, religion encourages women to resist mistreatment

As a roadblock, its misinterpretations can contribute to the victim's self blame and suffering to the abuser's rationalizations.

Religion: Resource or Roadblock?

- A correct reading of Scripture leads to an understanding of the equal dignity of men and women and to relationships based on mutuality and love.
 - Husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church.
 - Forgiveness does not mean forgetting the abuse or pretending it did not happen. Forgiveness is not permission to repeat the abuse.
 - An abused women's suffering is not punishment from God. This image of a harsh, cruel God runs contrary to the biblical image of a kind, merciful, loving God.
 - No person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage. We encourage abused persons who have divorced to investigate the possibility of seeking an annulment

First Responders: Priests, Deacons and Lay Ministers

- Intervention by Church ministers has three goals:
 - 1. Safety for the victim and children
 - 2. Accountability for the abuser
 - 3. Restoration of the relationship (if possible) or mourning over loss

First Responders: Priests, Deacons and Lay Ministers

First responders:

- Listen to and believe the victim's story
- Help assess the danger to oneself and children
- Refer to counseling and other specialized services

It is important to note that when dealing with people who abuse, church ministers need to hold them accountable for their behavior. Couple counseling is not appropriate, and can endanger the victim's safety.

What You Can Do to Help

For Abused Women

- You are not alone, and help is available for you.
- Talk in confidence to someone you trust.
- Set up a plan of action to ensure your safety.
- Find out about resources in your area, such as your diocesan Catholic Charities office or family life office.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE, provides crisis intervention and references to local services.

For Men Who Abuse

- Admit that abuse is your problem, and begin to believe that you can change your behavior if you choose to do so.
- Be willing to reach out for help.
- The Church is available to help you.
- Find alternative ways to act when you become frustrated or angry.

When I Call For Help: A Prayer

One source of healing that we have in our lives as Christians
is prayer.

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 will grieve and complain And my prayer will be heard.

What You Can Do To Help.. For Pastors and Pastoral Staff

- Include information about domestic violence and local resources in parish bulletins, newsletters and websites
- ✓ Place copies of this brochure and other information about domestic violence in women's restroom
- ✓ Keep an updated list of resources
- Find a staff person or volunteer to receive in depth training
- Provide training to all church ministers on domestic violence
- Participate in "Domestic Violence Awareness Month" (October)

- Use liturgies to draw attention to violence and abuse
- Describe what abuse is so that women recognize what's happening to them
- Identify violence against women as a sin in parish reconciliation services
- Ask direct questions if you suspect abuse
- Have an action plan in place incase an abused women calls on you for help
- Discuss domestic violence in marriage prep. sessions

