

Catholic Teaching on Domestic Violence



PAPAL TEACHING

Popes St John XXIII and St John Paul II have spoken about upholding the dignity of women in *Pacem in Terris* (On establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty, 1963) and *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the dignity and Vocation of Women, 1988) respectively. But it is in *Amoris Laetitia* (On Love in the Family, 2016) and in the “World Day of Peace Message” in 2017 that Pope Francis names the violence often targeted towards women, inside their own homes. Pope Francis affirms there is a need for good pastoral training in order to respond to this issue and support for Christian families experiencing it.

Pope St John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* #15

Christ's way of acting, the Gospel of his words and deeds, is a consistent protest against whatever offends the dignity of women.

Pope St John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* #41

Women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural dignity. Far from being content with a purely passive role or allowing themselves to be regarded as a kind of instrument, they are demanding both in **domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons.**

Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* #54

I think particularly of the shameful ill-treatment to which women are sometimes subjected, **domestic violence** and various forms of enslavement which, rather than a show of masculine power, are craven acts of cowardice. The verbal, physical and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union.

Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* #204

Good pastoral training is important “especially in light of particular emergency situations arising from cases of **domestic violence** and sexual abuse”. All this in no way diminishes, but rather complements, the fundamental value of spiritual direction, the rich spiritual treasures of the Church, and sacramental Reconciliation.

Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* #229

Parishes, movements, schools and other Church institutions can help in a variety of ways to support families and help them grow. These might include...talks by experts on concrete issues facing families, marriage counselling, home missionaries who help couples discuss their difficulties and desires, social services dealing with family problems like addiction, infidelity and **domestic violence**, programmes of spiritual growth, workshops for parents with troubled children and family meetings.

Pope Francis, *World Day Peace Message 2017 – Non-violence: A Style of Politics for Peace* #5

If violence has its source in the human heart, then it is fundamental that nonviolence be practised before all else within families...The family is the indispensable crucible in which spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, learn to communicate and to show generous concern for one another, and in which frictions and even conflicts have to be resolved not by force but by dialogue, respect, concern for the good of the other, mercy and forgiveness...I plead for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons...I plead with equal urgency for an end to **domestic violence** and to the abuse of women and children.

CANON LAW

Canon Law provides some guidance as to what constitutes a valid marriage

Canon 1055 §1

The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptised, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

Canon 1151

Spouses have the obligation and the right to maintain their common conjugal life, unless a lawful reason excuses them.

Canon 1153 §1

A spouse who occasions grave danger of soul or body to the other or to the children, or otherwise makes the common life unduly difficult, provides the other spouse with a lawful reason to leave, either by a decree of the local Ordinary or, if there is danger in delay, even on his or her own authority.

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Violence is anti-thetical to Christianity and the Good News it proclaims. The social doctrine of the Church tells us violence is not acceptable solution to any problem, it is unworthy of any human being, and it “destroys what it claims to defend”.

#488

Violence made its appearance in interpersonal relationships (*cf. Genesis 4:1-16*) and in social relationships (*cf. Genesis 11:1-9*). Peace and violence cannot dwell together, and where there is violence, God cannot be present (*cf. 1 Chronicles 22:8-9*).

#496

Violence is never a proper response. With the conviction of her faith in Christ and with the awareness of her mission, the Church proclaims “that violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy of man. Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings.”

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catechism tells us man and woman are both with one and the same dignity. Therefore one is neither superior nor inferior to the other; they are both made in the image of God. This implies that one neither has power over the other nor reason to lord over them.

#369

Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity “in the image of God”.

#1931

Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that “everyone should look upon his neighbour (without any exception) as ‘another self,’ above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity.”



If you are experiencing Domestic Violence

Ring 1800 RESPECT
1800 737 732

FOR AN INTERPRETER, RING 131 450
FOR THE NATIONAL RELAY SERVICE, RING 1800 555 677