

Strategies and Tools

To effectively combat domestic violence, we recommend:

Educational resources: we seek to develop and share resources that address healthy relationships, conflict resolution, and the unacceptability of violence.

Collaboration with Support Services: Partner with local shelters, counselling centers, and hotlines to provide immediate assistance to victims.

Training: We seek to develop the knowledge and tools to recognize signs of abuse and respond appropriately.

Community Outreach: Engage in community initiatives that challenge societal norms perpetuating domestic violence and support survivors in their healing journey.

Conclusion

Domestic violence is a grave violation of human dignity and a pressing issue that remains hidden in our communities. As members of the Marist Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Committee, we recognize the profound impact of this injustice and affirm our commitment to standing in solidarity with those who suffer. The statistics in Australia paint a sobering reality—violence affects millions, yet so many remain silent out of fear, shame, or lack of support. The Catholic Church, through the voices of its leaders, has called us to recognize, challenge, and respond to this crisis with compassion and courage.

Inspired by the Gospel and the Marist way, we pledge to take action:

- To be voices for the voiceless, raising awareness and breaking the silence surrounding domestic violence.
- To educate and advocate, ensuring that our communities understand the signs, impacts, and systemic nature of abuse.
- To support survivors with a compassionate and listening presence, concrete resources, and safe spaces where they can heal.
- To work for systemic change, courageously challenging cultural norms that enable abuse and advocating for just policies that protect the vulnerable.
- To uphold the dignity of every person, reflecting the love, respect, mercy, and peace that Christ calls us to live.

As Marists, we commit ourselves to building a culture of peace, respect, and justice. We will not remain indifferent to the suffering of those affected by domestic violence. Instead, we will walk with them, listen to them, advocate for them, and create communities where love, safety, and dignity prevail.

Let us go forward with courage, knowing that even small actions, rooted in faith and justice, can transform lives and help end the cycle of violence.

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STATEMENT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



*Marist Family Justice, Peace
& Integrity of Creation Committee*

Domestic violence is a pervasive and deeply troubling issue within Australia, affecting individuals, families, and communities across the nation.

As a community rooted in the Marist tradition, we are called to confront this injustice with compassion, action, and unwavering commitment to the dignity of every person.

The Reality of Domestic Violence in Australia

Recent statistics reveal the alarming prevalence of domestic violence in our society:

Prevalence of Violence: Approximately 41% of Australians, equating to 8 million individuals, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.

Gender Disparity: One in four women (23% or 2.3 million) and one in fourteen men (7.3% or 693,000) have endured violence from an intimate partner since the age of 15.

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse has affected 23% of women and 14% of men, highlighting the multifaceted nature of domestic violence.

Underreporting: A significant number of incidents remain unreported, with 82.1% of women and 97.2% of men who experienced violence from a current partner never contacting the police.

Voices from the Catholic Community

The Catholic Church has consistently spoken out against domestic violence. Here are eight poignant reflections from prominent Catholic leaders:

1. Pope Francis: "Men who commit violence against women engage in something that is 'almost satanic'."
2. Australian Catholic Bishops Conference: "Relationships must be marked by respect and freedom rather than coercion and control."
3. Pope Francis: "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".
4. Pope John Paul II: "The dignity of women is a reflection of the dignity of the Church herself."
5. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops : "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."
6. Australian Catholic Bishops Conference: "We believe that respect, dignity and justice, transformation and hope are possible".
7. Pope John XXIII: "Far from being content with a purely passive role or allowing themselves to be regarded as a kind of instrument, women are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons".
8. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops : "The Catholic Church teaches that violence against another person in any form fails to treat that person as someone worthy of love."

The Hidden Crisis

Domestic violence often remains concealed, shrouded in stigma and fear. Many victims suffer in silence, feeling isolated and unsupported. This silence perpetuates the cycle of abuse, making it imperative for communities to foster environments where victims feel safe to speak out and seek help.

Our Call to Action

As members of the Marist community, we are compelled to:

Raise Awareness: Educate ourselves and others about the signs of domestic violence and its profound impact.

Advocate for Victims: Support policies and programs that protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

Provide Support: Offer resources, counselling, and safe spaces for those affected by domestic violence.

Promote Respectful Relationships: Encourage and model relationships based on mutual respect, equality, and love.

