

Domestic Violence Awareness

Domestic violence is a tough subject, and one that the Church continues to address. Many of the saints identified as domestic violence victims were during a time in the Church where women were very strongly advised to stay with their abuser and offer it up. Though these saints were heroic women for what they endured and offered to God on behalf of others, it may send the wrong message to women (and men) today who are in an abusive relationship that the Church's teaching is that they stay and make it work.

"An abused woman may see her suffering as just punishment for a past deed for which she feels guilty. She may try to explain suffering by saying that it is "God's will" or "part of God's plan for my life" or "God's way of teaching me a lesson." This image of a harsh, cruel God runs contrary to the biblical image of a kind, merciful, and loving God. Jesus went out of his way to help suffering women. Think of the woman with the hemorrhage (Mk 5:25-34) or the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:1-11). God promises to be present to us in our suffering, even when it is unjust.

Finally, we emphasize that no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage. Some abused women believe that church teaching on the permanence of marriage requires them to stay in an abusive relationship. They may hesitate to seek a separation or divorce. They may fear that they cannot re-marry in the Church. Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage. We encourage abused persons who have divorced to investigate the possibility of seeking an annulment. An annulment, which determines that the marriage bond is not valid, can frequently open the door to healing." - USCCB, *When I Call for Help*



Image is from a stained glass window at St. Edmundsbury Cathedral in England

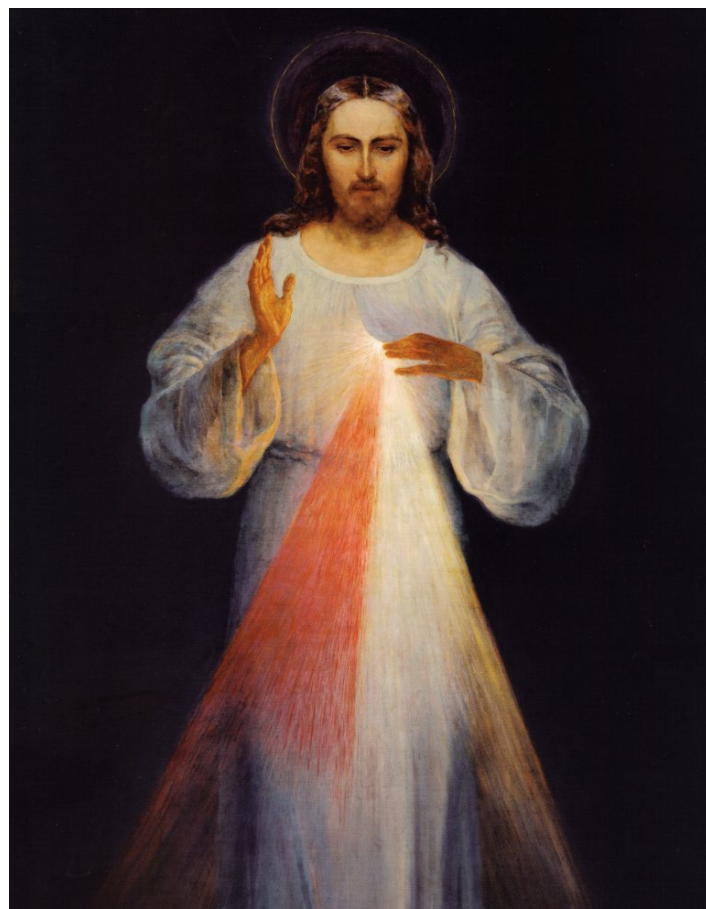
In the story of Miriam in the Old Testament, we see a woman who knew that God's desire for her was liberation, not bondage, and who used her strength to help her brothers Moses and Aaron lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Pray

Listen to the song, Waymaker, originally by Nigerian singer and songwriter, Sinach.



Then, make a list of the ways that God has made a way for you when there was no way. How might God be with you in the same way today? Whenever you feel discouraged, return to this list and remember God's faithfulness.



The Image of Divine Mercy, as revealed to St. Faustina Kowalska in 1931

"Violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal is sinful; often, it is a crime as well." USCCB, *When I Call for Help*, 2002. The Catholic Bishops of the United States affirmed their stance against domestic violence, and their support for victims of domestic violence, in their 2002 statement, **When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women**, an updated version of their 1992 statement.

Read the statement [here](#):



Learn



Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, a life-size mural in the chapel of the Njase Girls Secondary School, Zambia. Painted by Emmanuel Nsama.

Act:

Over the years St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities has adapted their programs to better meet changing needs in the community. A key increase identified over the past few years was a dramatic rise in domestic violence reported among shelter residents. In 2020, 43% of program intakes reported domestic violence as a key factor contributing to their current homelessness. They now offer a trauma-informed care approach to begin the healing process, offer intensive case management, and provide transitional housing and rapid rehousing options with the goal of achieving stability and self-sufficiency for these households. Make a donation to St. Elizabeth Catholic Charities through the [link](#) or QR code.

