

**Our Lady of the Wayside Parish, Arlington Heights, IL**  
**Homily offered Oct 23, 2016, by Deacon Mike Madison**  
**Reading: Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18**

In our first reading today taken from the Book of the Sirach, we hear “The Lord is a God of justice . . . ., He hears the cries of the oppressed.” Do we hear those cries in our own community? In our own parish? In our neighborhood? In our homes? Can we shine light on those who need justice? October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Pope Francis made family life his central message over a year ago on his visit to the United States. He convened the Synod of Bishops on the Family and the Synod continued to meet in Philadelphia, reminding families that they are “factories of hope.” Pope Francis also recognized that “in families, there is always a Cross.”

But abuse in the home is not such a cross. We are not to bear a cross of violence. If you think that is your cross, it is not, and seek help now. Sometimes within families, the person you once trusted most is the one you now fear. On a typical day, there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide. One in three women and one in four men have been victims of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime. Domestic violence results in more injuries that require serious medical attention than accidents, muggings and rapes combined. In Cook County there are over 500 calls a day for domestic violence incidents. Annually, over 3 million children become victims of child abuse. And, according to the best available estimates, between 2 and 11% of the nation’s older adult population experiences abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation each year. College students report that 21% have been victims of abuse by someone they are dating, and 10% of high school students are victims of dating abuse.

Lest you think it not a problem here, that domestic abuse happens somewhere else, listen to these figures from Arlington Heights Deputy Chief Nick Pecora, a parishioner:

- Domestic Battery Cases (physical assault occurred and an arrest was made): 2014 had 102 cases, 2015 had 103 cases, and as of September 2016, there have been 67 cases.
- Domestic Trouble Cases (arguing, no physical contact, no arrests were made): 2014 had 564 cases, 2015 had 557 cases, and as of September 2016, there have been 413 cases.
- Violation of Order of Protection Cases (someone violates an order of protection): 2014 had 21 cases, 2015 had 20 cases, and as of September 2016, there have been 15 cases.

Another staff member shared that over 75% of the calls to a home in our village is related to domestic abuse.

**Our Lady of the Wayside Parish, Arlington Heights, IL**  
**Homily offered Oct 23, 2016, by Deacon Mike Madison**  
**Reading: Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18**

It's important to know that these statistics are probably low – most abuse is unreported because of shame, embarrassment, denial or fear. Domestic violence crosses over socioeconomic, religious and ethnic groups, and includes abuse between intimate partners living together as married or unmarried, or those who are dating and includes spousal and child abuse. As Catholics we recognize that any form of violence or abuse is sinful and we should offer support to those who are victims and abusers alike.

What is domestic violence? It is a learned purposeful behavior where a manifestation of the abuser's need to achieve and maintain power and control over the victim exists. It can vary widely from physical harm, financial control, verbal threats, intimidation and other forms as well. It usually follows a repeating cycle of a tension building phase, the abusive incident and a honeymoon phase, which must be broken to prevent further abuse.

What causes domestic violence? It is a learned behavior reinforced by observation and experience and often due to the abuser needing to feel superior over the victim. It may be exacerbated by alcohol, drugs, anger, stress or genetics but it is not caused by them. It is not caused by the victim or the problems within a relationship.

What does the Catholic Church say? According to the U.S. Catholic conference of Bishops "... we state as clearly and strongly as we can that violence, inside or outside the home, is never justified." Further:

The abused person's suffering is NOT punishment from God.

Scripture teaches love and equal dignity for all human life.

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting or pretending the abuse did not and forgiveness is not permission to repeat the abuse.

No person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage. Seeking an annulment is encouraged.

What can we do? We can assist those who are being abused by listening, believing what they tell us, directing them to Kathy O'Neill, our Parish Nurse, who has local resource connections, and praying for them. Let them know they are not alone and do not have to continue the ordeal by themselves. There is help for them. Acknowledge that they are in a difficult scary position and keep listening. Your presence is important. Help them develop a safety plan. Visit our parish web site under the tab Support then select Domestic Abuse to learn more about the cycle of abuse, how you can help a victim and what other resources are available.

**Our Lady of the Wayside Parish, Arlington Heights, IL**  
**Homily offered Oct 23, 2016, by Deacon Mike Madison**  
**Reading: Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18**

We can become involved in our Domestic Abuse Ministry, which meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month at 7:15 PM. All are welcome to attend. Our Domestic Abuse Ministry has expanded the focus of the annual Domestic Violence Awareness Month campaign in October to include all forms of violence in families, not just domestic, intimate partner abuse, but also teen dating violence, child and elder abuse. Last February we partnered with our Teen Ministry and Alexian Brothers Health System to present a workshop for our teens on healthy relationships. It was an interactive program engaging our teens to think about appropriate behavior and what is not acceptable behavior. As parents you can model and teach your children about healthy relationships.

Recently we went beyond the walls of OLW to be part of a special event held at St. James, Shine the Light, A Candlelight Prayer Vigil for Those Affected by Family Violence. You may have seen the article in the Daily Herald a few weeks ago, or the notices in the bulletin, or the posters on the way into church, or the purple ribbons around the trees. The vigil was coordinated by the three Arlington Heights Catholic parish ministries, beginning with a Mass concelebrated by the pastors of the three parishes. There were presenters who shared facts and figures and stories, including Fr. Corey Brost of St. Viator, Fr. Charles Dahm from the Archdiocese of Chicago, whom you may remember spoke at all our Masses two years ago, and Mayor Tom Hayes, as well as a survivor of family abuse, and experts in various fields of family violence services spoke.

We can shine light on those who need justice. We can pray and be aware that this problem exists nearby and not turn our heads away. We can listen and act to be the voice of the oppressed crying out for justice.

Saint John Paul II, Pope, whose feast day we celebrated earlier today (yesterday), said "Darkness can only be scattered by light. Hatred can only be conquered by love." We can and should be the light for our neighbors who may be in the darkness of domestic abuse.