

The Catholic bishops of Ireland, England & Wales and Scotland have chosen to focus on domestic abuse as the theme for Day for Life 2019. We wish to raise awareness of the prevalence of this issue across our countries.

Laura's Story¹

'My name is Laura and I am forty-three years old. I have three daughters and a beautiful grand-daughter. During my many years of marriage, I was repeatedly abused by my husband. I had my jaw and teeth broken, and on several occasions was strangled to the point of unconsciousness. Despite knowing that his behaviour was unacceptable, I desperately wanted my marriage to work ...'

To read Laura's full story and learn about Church initiatives in this area, go to: www.catholicbishops.ie or www.dayforlife.org. #DayforLife2019.

An Intolerable Problem

One in four women and about one in six men suffers from domestic abuse in their lifetime. According to a 2018 report², almost nine out of every ten women murdered in Ireland are killed by a man known to them. This fatal violence is at the most severe end of the spectrum of domestic abuse. Women's Aid says that the dangerous patterns present in abusive relationships are all too often dismissed and not taken seriously, which can put women at risk of serious assault or homicide.

It is a deeply regrettable fact that men, women and children suffer domestic abuse at the hands of husbands, wives, parents and other family members. Violence of this kind should

never be tolerated or justified. It is an offence against the dignity of the human person.

Pope Francis

The Church recognises the hurt done to those who have experienced domestic abuse. As Pope Francis wrote in 2016:

Unacceptable customs still need to be eliminated. 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. (*Amoris Laetitia*, 54)

How can Catholic parishes and communities be places of safety, welcome and assistance?

This is a call to action for our parishes, schools and Catholic communities to reflect, learn and act together, so that we can help those suffering from domestic abuse in our parishes, our workplaces and even in our own homes. Knowing what to look for and spotting the signs means that, individually and collectively, we can make a real difference to people's lives.

It is time to start talking and taking action. Go to www.dayforlife.org or www.catholicbishops.ie to find out more about what you can do.

NOTES

1. The name has been changed to protect the identity of the survivor.
2. Women's Aid, *Femicide Report*, 2018.

About Day For Life

Day for Life is celebrated annually by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness of the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition.



Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference
Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co Kildare
www.catholicbishops.ie



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