

# Understanding Domestic Violence (DV) and Prevention Strategies for Members of the Catholic Church



# Understanding DV and Prevention Strategies

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# Understanding DV and Prevention Strategies

- Objectives
- Understand DV
- Understand the dynamics of DV
- Examine and understand the position of the Catholic Church on DV
  - Document: U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Domestic violence
- Examine and discuss prevention strategies
  - Document: The Catholic Church as a Support for Immigrant Mexican Women living with Domestic Violence
- Resources and help for families



*“In the beginning, I was young...he was handsome. He said I was beautiful, smart, worthy of love... made me feel that way.*

*And so we were married, walking joyfully together down a church aisle, our union blessed by God.*

*Then came the angry words... the verbal tearing apart... Now I was made to feel ugly, unintelligent, unworthy of any love, God's or man's.”*

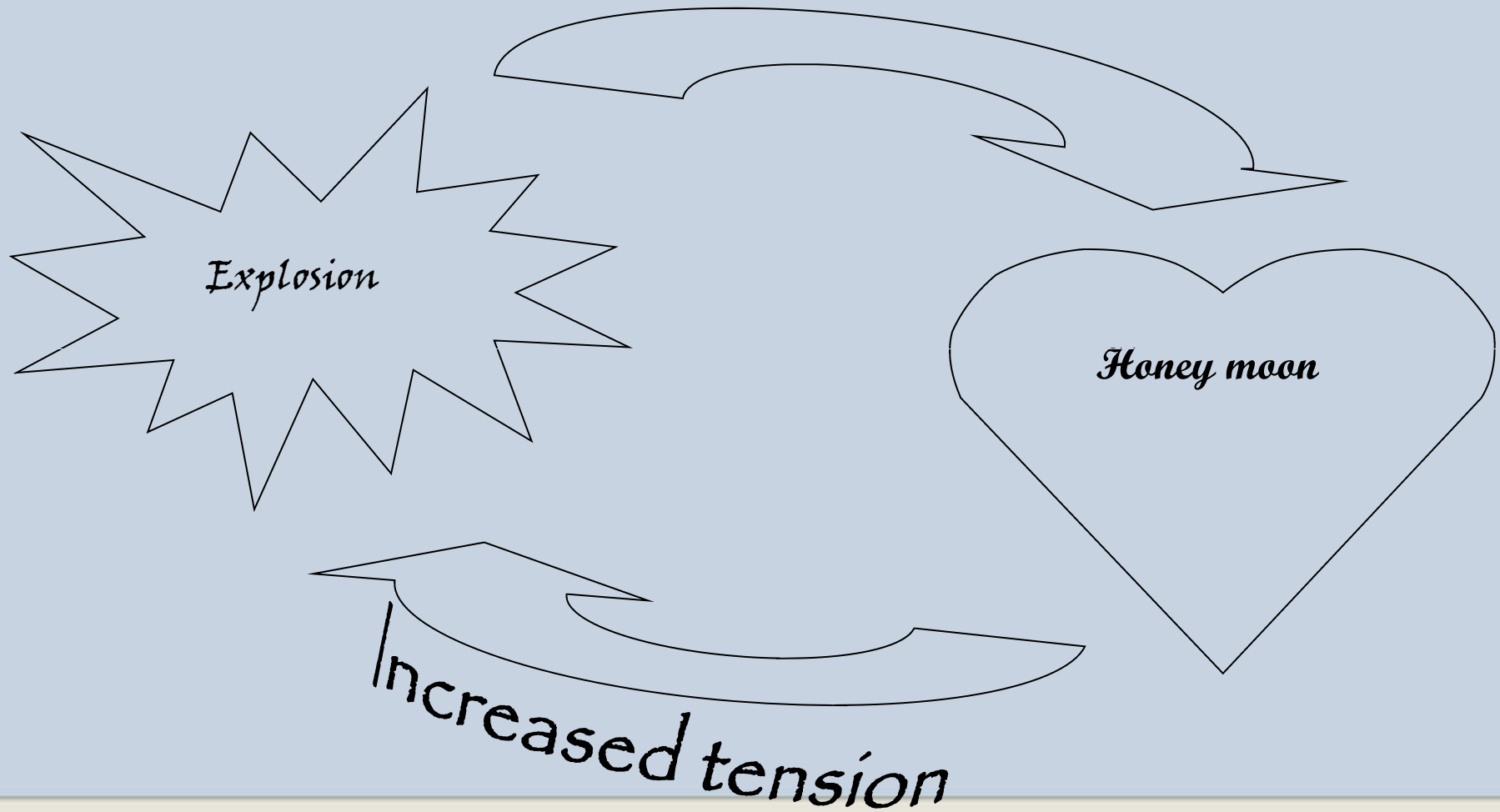


# What is domestic violence?

- **Domestic Violence** is any kind of behavior that a person uses to control an intimate partner through fear and intimidation.
- It includes physical, sexual, psychological, verbal and economic abuse.
- Examples include battering, name calling and insults, threats to kill or harm one's partner or children, marital rape, or forced abortion.



# Cycle of violence



# Power and control wheel





*“Next came the beatings... unrelenting violence.. unceasing pain. I shouldn’t stay, but this is my husband...promised forever. He says I deserve it... maybe I do... if I could just be good. I feel so alone... doesn’t God hear me ?”*



# Overview of domestic violence

## WHY MEN BATTER

- Men who abuse generally share some common characteristics, they tend to be jealous, possessive and easily angered
- Hold a view of women as inferior
- Alcohol and Drugs



# Continued

## WHY WOMEN STAY

- **Fear** : for themselves, for their children, fear that they cannot support themselves



# The position of the Catholic Church

- When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women
- Document of the Catholic Church: U.S. Catholic Bishops wrote a review of the letter in 2002 (original letter written in 1992)
- "... We declare so clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women in the home is never justified"
- "... The violence in any form: physical, sexual, psychological or verbal, is sinful, it is often also a crime"



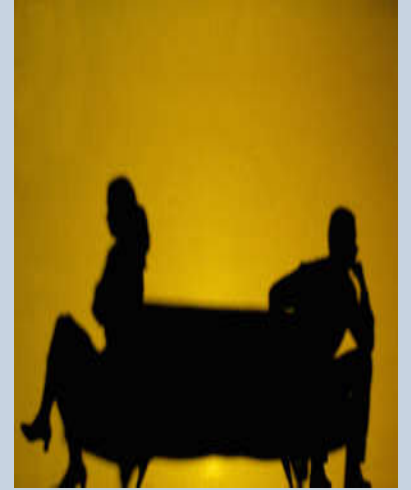
## *Religion: Resource or Roadblock ?*

- As a resource, religion encourages women to resist mistreatment.
- As a roadblock, its misinterpretations can contribute to the victim's self blame and suffering to the abuser's rationalizations.



# Continued

- A correct reading of Scripture leads to an understanding of the equal dignity of men and women and to relationships based on mutuality and love.
  - Husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church.
  - Forgiveness does not mean forgetting the abuse or pretending it did not happen. Forgiveness is not permission to repeat the abuse.



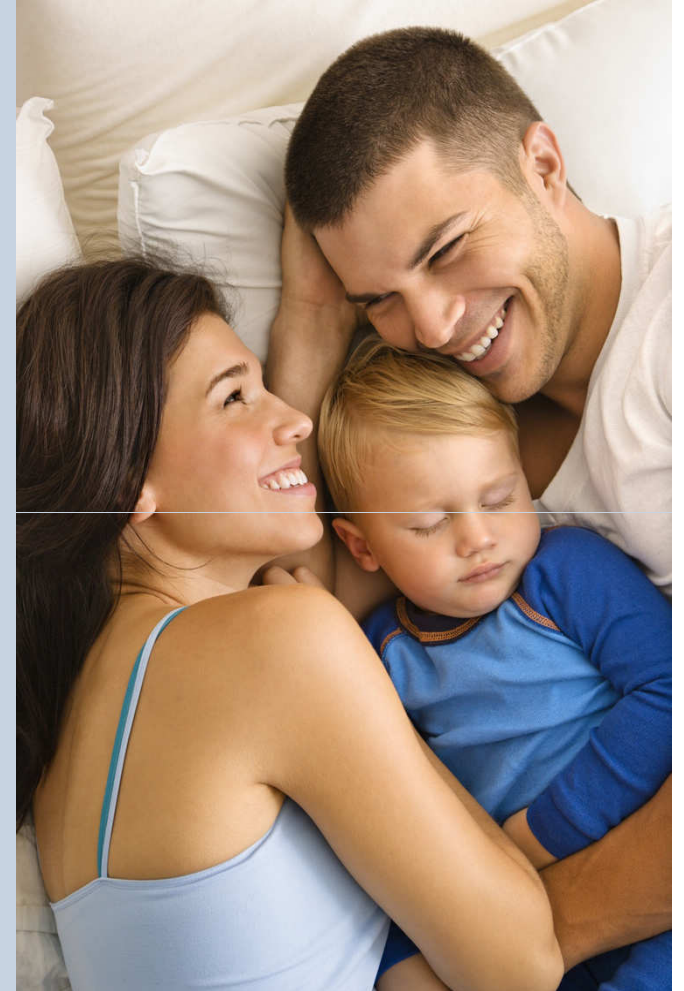
## Continued

- An abused women's suffering is not punishment from God. This image of a harsh, cruel God runs contrary to the biblical image of a kind, merciful, loving God.
- 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.



# Continued

- Jesus in the New Testament
- He taught that all men and women are beings worthy of respect and dignity
- "Jesus went out of His way to help women who were vulnerable"





## *What You Can Do to Help*

- For Abused Women
- You are not alone, and help is available for you.
- Talk in confidence to someone you trust.
- Set up a plan of action to ensure your safety.
- Find out about resources in your area, such as your diocesan Catholic Charities office or family life office.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE, provides crisis intervention and references to local services.

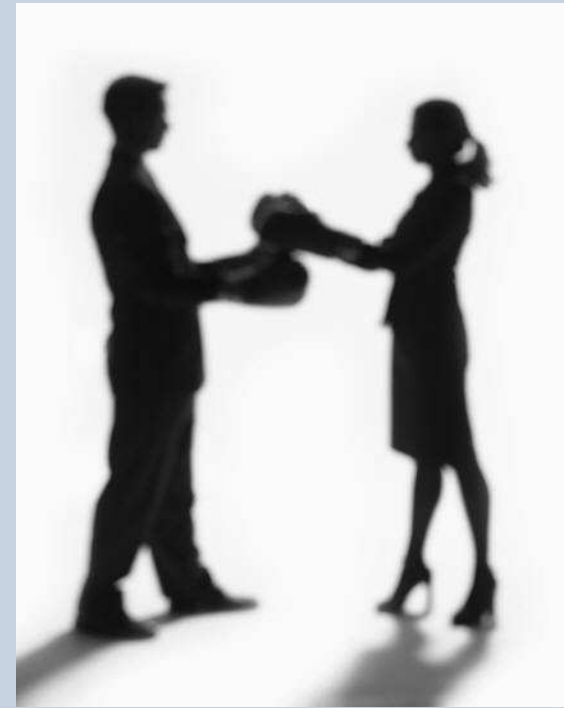
# *What You Can Do to Help*

- For Men Who Abuse
- Admit that abuse is your problem, and begin to believe that you can change your behavior if you choose to do so.
- Be willing to reach out for help.
- The Church is available to help you.
- Find alternative ways to act when you become frustrated or angry.



## *First Responders: Priests, Deacons and Lay Ministers*

- Intervention by Church members has three goals:
- Safety for the victim and children
- Accountability for the abuser
- Restoration of the relationship
  - (if possible) or mourning over loss



# *First Responders: Priests, Deacons and Lay Ministers*

## First responders:

- Listen to and believe the victim's story
- Help assess the danger to oneself and children
- Refer to counseling and other specialized services

It is important to note that when dealing with people who abuse, church ministers need to hold them accountable for their behavior. Couple counseling is not appropriate, and can endanger the victim's safety.



# Lethality Assessment

**A2CADU LETHALITY ASSESSMENT**

**USE OF DRUGS or alcohol**

**DEPRESSION &/OR OTHER MENTAL ILLNESS**

**ACCESS TO WEAPONS**

**STALKING**

**OBSESSION: "IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU, NO ONE CAN"**

**THREATENS SUICIDE &/OR HOMICIDE**

**EASY ACCESS TO VICTIM &/OR CHILDREN**

**HISTORY OF DV &/OR VIOLENCE**

**Unemployed**

**WORK HOME SCHOOL**

**Not the parent of kids living in the home**

**RAGE**

Created 1998; Updated: 2004  
L. Norris

*Prevention Strategies:  
What You Can Do To help  
For Pastors and Pastoral Staff*

- ✓ Include information about domestic violence and local resources in parish bulletins, newsletters and websites
- ✓ Place copies of the Bishop's Document on DV and other information about domestic violence in women's restroom
- ✓ Keep an updated list of resources
- ✓ Find a staff person or volunteer to receive in depth training
- ✓ Provide training to all church ministers on domestic violence
- ✓ Participate in "Domestic Violence Awareness Month" (October)



*Prevention Strategies  
What You Can Do To Help:  
For Pastors and Pastoral Staff*

- ✓ Use liturgies to draw attention to violence and abuse
- ✓ Describe what abuse is so that women recognize what's happening to them
- ✓ Identify violence against women as a sin in parish reconciliation services
- ✓ Ask direct questions if you suspect abuse
- ✓ Have an action plan in place incase an abused women calls on you for help
- ✓ Discuss domestic violence in marriage prep. sessions





# Parish Safety plan in Place

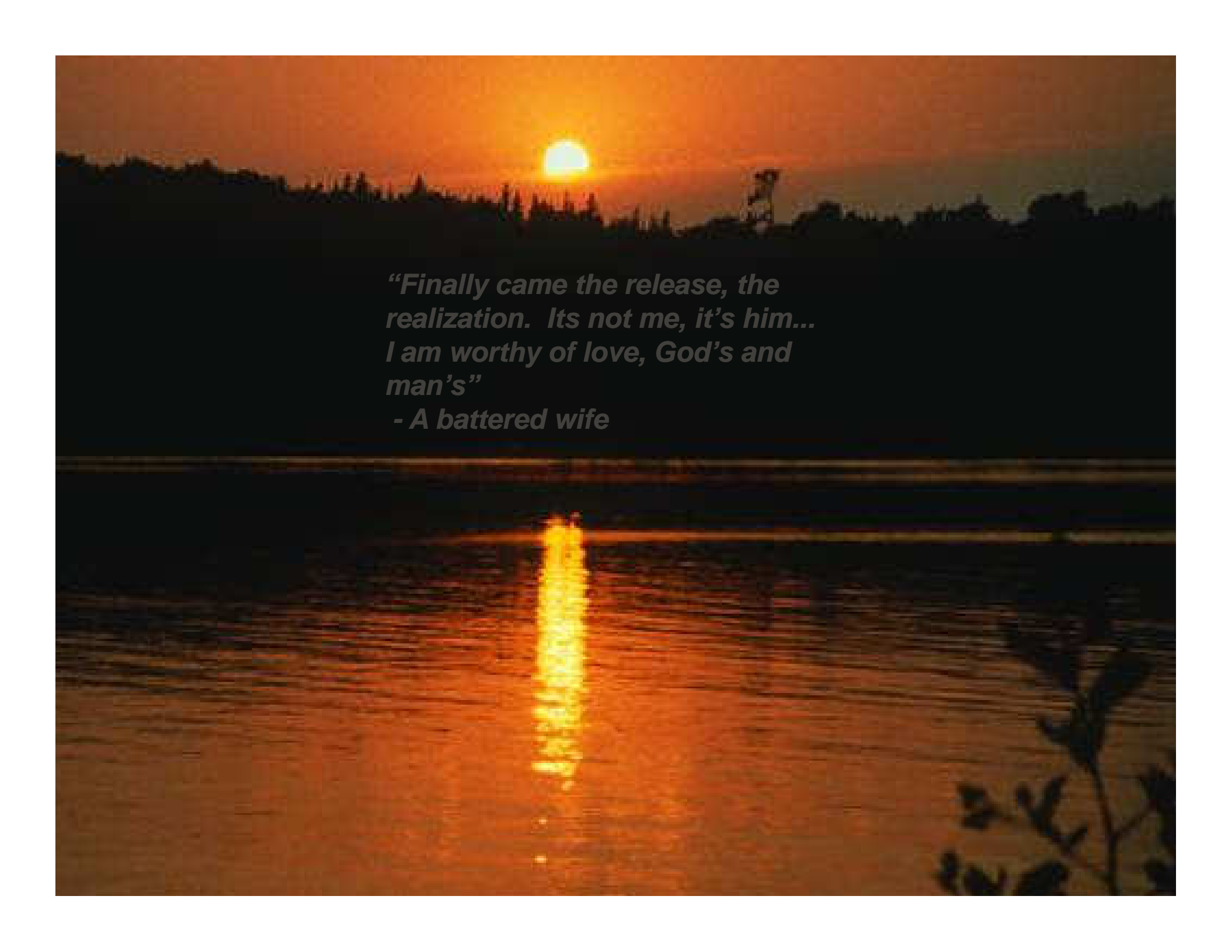


1. Most important issue is victim's safety
2. Ask to speak with her in private, ask her if it is urgent, if she needs to speak with someone right away, be careful about making appointments in lethal situations
3. Seek the person in the parish with in-depth training and knowledge on DV (each parish should have one person who has received in-depth training)
4. Ask the victim what has happened and what she needs
5. Your job is to assess her safety and the children's safety
6. Offer immediate options, what she would like to do

## Continued

7. Have a list of resources available
8. Seek assistance from the police department if the victim wishes to involve them
9. Seek assistance from local social service agencies or consultants (i.e., victim advocate) in the community
10. Call the 1-800-799-SAFE for immediate housing and crisis options



A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is a bright yellow-orange orb in the upper center, with its light reflecting as a shimmering vertical column on the water's surface. The sky is a gradient of orange and red, and the background shows a dark silhouette of a forest and a lighthouse. The text is overlaid in the middle-left area.

***“Finally came the release, the realization. Its not me, it’s him... I am worthy of love, God’s and man’s”  
- A battered wife***

# Prevention strategies for members of the Catholic Church

- Awareness building
- Talk about domestic violence
- Examine sacramental preparation (i.e., Holy Communion, Reconciliation, Marriage) and discuss ways to incorporate a discussion on God's infinite love – one not based on violence)
- Community partnership with social service providers
- Document: “The Catholic Church as a support for immigrant Mexican women living with domestic violence” (Marrs Fuchsel, 2011, in press)



# Equality wheel

- A healthy relationship consists of:
- Non-threatening behavior
- Respect
- Confidence and support
- Honesty and accountability
- Assuming parental responsibility
- Shared responsibility

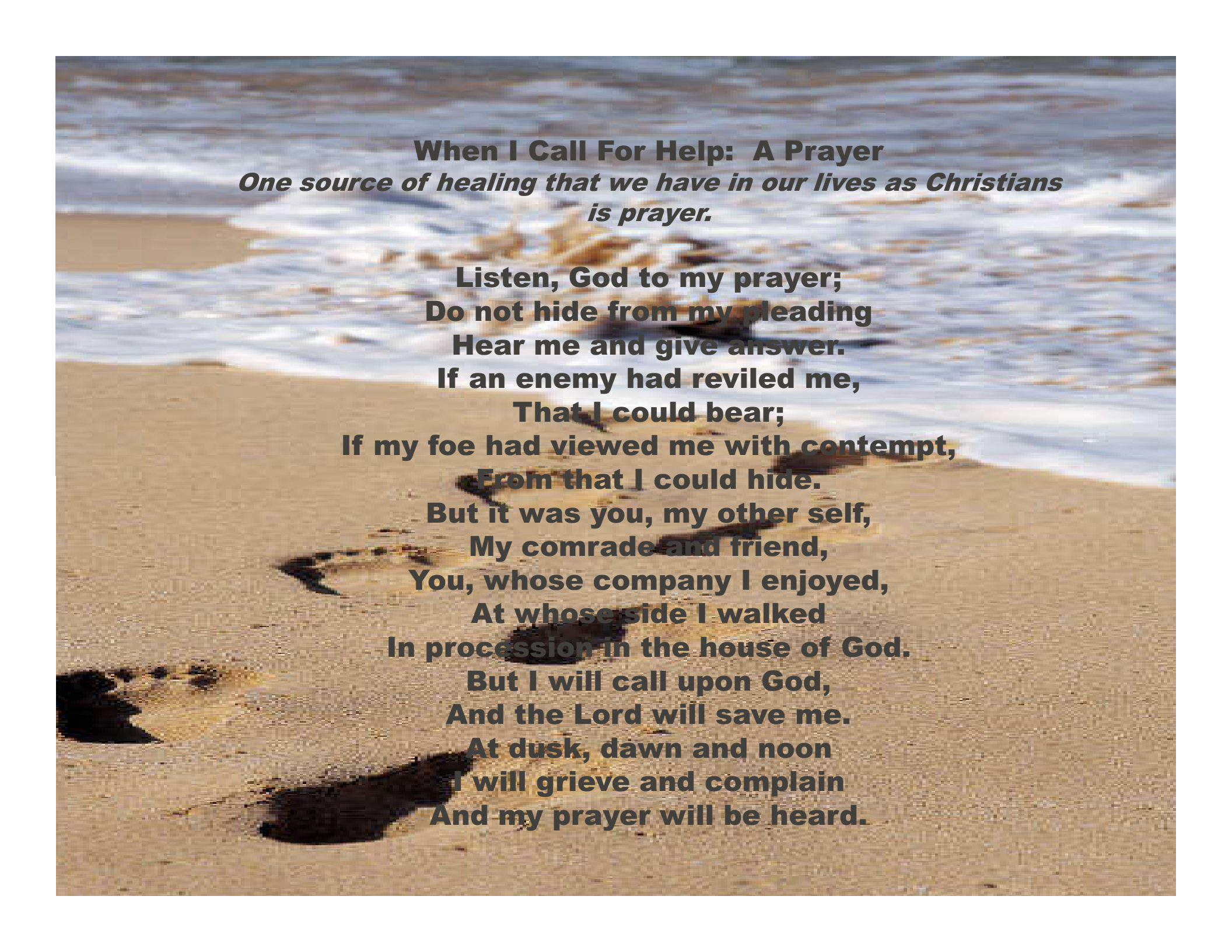


# Help and Resources for the Family

- In lethal situations:
  - Orders of protection
  - Call the police
  - Families should have provide a non-judgmental stance and provide support
  - Families should encourage the abuser to seek help
  - Couples therapy is not appropriate for incidences of domestic violence because of safety factor
  - Individuals should seek counseling separately







**When I Call For Help: A Prayer**  
*One source of healing that we have in our lives as Christians  
is prayer.*

**Listen, God to my prayer;  
Do not hide from my pleading  
Hear me and give answer.  
If an enemy had reviled me,  
That I could bear;  
If my foe had viewed me with contempt,  
From that I could hide.  
But it was you, my other self,  
My comrade and friend,  
You, whose company I enjoyed,  
At whose side I walked  
In procession in the house of God.  
But I will call upon God,  
And the Lord will save me.  
At dusk, dawn and noon  
I will grieve and complain  
And my prayer will be heard.**



