



October 25, 2023

Dear Father,

Late in 1987, Pope St. John Paul II began his encyclical on Social Concern by emphasizing a declaration from *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution from the Second Vatican Council. He elevated the opening lines of that document as an imperative call to action for the Church:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.

We are currently faced with a distressing reality: reports of domestic violence cases in the state of Missouri have tripled since the Covid pandemic began in 2020. As the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops have forcefully written “As pastors of the Catholic Church in the United States, we state as clearly and strongly as we can that 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.” It is crucial that we as ministers of the gospel of Christ, educate ourselves on patterns of behavior that run contrary to the dignity of human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

This is why I am recommending to you a helpful and extensive resource for ministering to all those affected by domestic violence. *Toward Healing: A Manual for Supporting Women and Ending Domestic Violence* includes information on the nature of domestic violence and abuse, and how to detect it, guidance on how to minister to both victims and abusers, and examples of how to discuss domestic violence in the context of your parish bulletin and weekly celebration of the Mass. It will be an invaluable resource as we all take up the challenge to do all we can to end domestic violence in our communities.

As a first step, the Archdiocese is asking every parish to post information about resources for those experiencing domestic violence in each of the restrooms in your church so that those who are in need can more easily connect to organizations that can help them and more importantly, so they know they are not alone. Included are stickers that can be placed on bathroom mirrors or on the back of bathroom doors as well as trifold cards that identify resources in every county of the Archdiocese.

Thank you for joining me in becoming more educated on this persistent pattern of abuse within our midst, and for working together throughout the Archdiocese to prepare the way for the healing power of the Holy Spirit.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski  
Archbishop of St. Louis