

Domestic Violence Awareness Fact Sheet for Spiritual Leaders and Laity

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- **Problem Defined**—Domestic Violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in which a person uses coercion, deception, harassment, humiliation, manipulation and/or force in order to establish and maintain power and control over that person's current or former intimate partner.
- **Tactic**—Perpetrators use economic, emotional, physical, psychological, sexual, spiritual, and/or verbal tactics to get their way. These tactics include, but are not limited to dictating how their victims dress; to whom they can and cannot relate; what they can and cannot do, say, and think; and when their victims can and cannot study, work, and worship. The tactics also include referring to victims by disgusting, disrespectful, and vulgar names: "bitch," "slut," "stupid," "whore," to name just a few, and threats made by perpetrators to kill themselves; their victims; the victims' caregivers, family, friends, and pets; as well as the destruction of items meaningful to victims like books, heirlooms, jewelry, photos, and other property.
- **Prevalence**—The American Medical Association estimates that two million women in the United States are assaulted each year by an intimate partner. The Justice Department's National Institute of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Disease Control and Prevention state that nearly twenty-five percent of surveyed women say they have been raped and/or physically assaulted by a current or former spouse or partner at some point in their lives. These alarming statistics do not include many of the emotional, psychological, and spiritual abuse tactics male perpetrators use to violate their female victims.
- **Scope**—Domestic violence occurs in every culture, ethnicity, race, religion, and in all socio-economic classes.
- **Causes**—Domestic Violence is caused by the conscious decision and willful choice of perpetrators. Their goal is to get what they want, when they want it. The problem is not caused by the use of alcohol or other drugs; children; job stress; psychological illness; pets; Satan; and, of special note, not caused by the violated women. Domestic violence is also not due to a man having anger or control problems. In fact, most perpetrators are very controlled individuals who believe they are entitled, often by some alleged religious or spiritual "truth," to demand their way.
- **Hopeful News**—Women of faith will most often turn first to clergy, other pastoral ministers, and fellow congregates when seeking help for situations involving domestic violence.
- **Challenging News**—Spiritual leaders and laity must be willing to receive appropriate education and training on domestic violence intervention and prevention strategies, and be willing to partner with existing service providers in their communities, in order to be helpful to the victims-survivors and perpetrators living and worshiping in their midst.