

# CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – F.A.Q.



## 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. Some examples: battering, name-calling and insults, threats to kill or harm one's partner or children, destruction of property, marital rape, and forced sterilization or abortion.

[www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/familypeace](http://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/familypeace)

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## What if my suffering is a just punishment for my past sins? Could it be part of God's will?

No. God is not teaching you a lesson and would never want someone to abuse you. This image of a harsh, cruel God runs contrary to the Biblical image of a kind, merciful, and loving God.

## Does the Church expect me to stay in an abusive marriage?

No. The Church's Code of Canon Law 1153 states clearly: "Spouses ordinarily have the duty to live married life together, but a legitimate cause excuses them from doing so. If either of the spouses causes grave mental or physical danger to the other spouse or to the offspring or otherwise renders common life too difficult, that spouse gives the other a legitimate cause for leaving, either by decree of the local ordinary or even on his or her own authority if there is danger in delay."

**YOU DON'T DESERVE TO BE ABUSED!**

## I'm afraid that if I leave this marriage I won't be able to re-marry in the Church. Is that true?

No. You could re-marry in the Church if you are granted an annulment, which determines that the marriage bond is not valid. Any Catholic priest can assist you in getting this process started.

## But aren't we supposed to forgive and turn the other cheek, especially if they are sorry and promise to reform?

Forgiveness doesn't mean you need to subject yourself to abuse. Remorse and begging forgiveness are manipulative methods often used by abusers to control their victims. Abusers rarely stop abusing; in fact, the abuse will almost always get worse as time goes on. Help is available. Call 1-800-799-7233 or one of the local agencies listed.

## Are there any local agencies that can help?

Yes! There are agencies that help people facing this situation:

Calvert Calvert County – (410) 535-5400 x 384

Charles County – Center for Abused Persons  
(301) 645-3336

District of Columbia – DC SAFE 1 (800) 407-5048

Montgomery County – Family Justice Center  
(240) 773-0444

Prince George's County – Community Crisis Services  
(301) 731-1203

St. Mary's County – Southern MD Center for Family Advocacy  
(301) 373-4141

**NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE: 1-800-799-7233**