



UGANDA EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

(UGANDA CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT)

Nsambya Hill, 672 Hanlon Road

Dear Parishioner,

Greetings and Peace be with you all. Today the Church comes together to launch this Advent initiative for Peace to tackle the scourge of domestic violence in our land.

Domestic violence is widespread in our country. 60% of Ugandan women have experienced violence and in certain areas of our country the percentage of women who experience violence goes up to over 70%. A wide number of studies show that most of this violence happens within the home, from their husbands, those who are meant to love and cherish them. The phenomenon of widespread domestic violence is a major social and moral problem in Uganda. The devastating nature of the danger created by domestic violence poses numerous risks and challenges to both Church and Society. It threatens to tear apart the institution of the family, negatively affects the lives of our children, destroys life and property, divides communities and can distort the hopes and potentials of present and future generations.

This reality is a challenge to all of us. For this reason, I am pleased to launch this Advent initiative to tackle and create a response to this issue. We all need to focus on the root causes of this terrible problem and to ensure that drunkenness, promiscuity, lust, jealousy, revenge, selfishness and greed are not present in our hearts and in our homes.

The Church cannot keep quiet when the domestic church, the family, is being ravaged by the evil of domestic violence. If this happens we shall be accused of the **sin of omission**. This must never happen.

As the Church leadership we commit ourselves to the promotion of the common good. All of us have the right to be loved, respected, educated, and to live a life free of fear. When domestic violence is present these basic rights which we all share, that have been bestowed by God are denied. The Church remains firm to defend and protect the family as a parent, teacher, builder, reconciler, peace-maker and advocate.

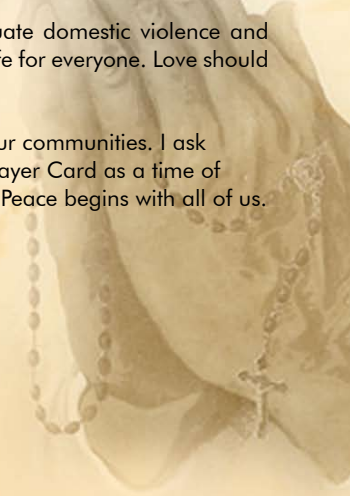
In conclusion, this Advent calls us to repent from evils that perpetuate domestic violence and make our families and communities places of peace and harmony safe for everyone. Love should be at the center of all we do and say.

Today we call for an end to domestic violence in our homes and in our communities. I ask that we make this stand together and that we use our daily Advent Prayer Card as a time of reflection and prayer in bringing peace and healing into our homes. Peace begins with all of us.

May the Peace of Christ reign in our hearts and in our homes,

Archbishop Odama

Chairman Catholic Episcopal Conference



Introduction

The Catholic Bishops of Uganda have chosen this Season of Advent to ask us all to reflect on domestic violence in our families and in the country as a whole. Marking this period as a time to end violence in our communities in order to improve family relations and focus on harmony and peace in the home.

The word Advent means “coming” or “arrival” and is a unique time in the life of our Church. It is a time when we are asked to reflect and prepare for the coming of Christ. It is a time of quiet anticipation. For Christ to come into our hearts, we must be ready: as people, as families, as communities and as a nation.

This is a time when we focus on what is important in our lives and prepare a path in our hearts for the birth of our Lord. To truly welcome Him, we must try to make our hearts places of peace. And how can we do this when peace does not exist in our homes and in our communities? We know that there are those here among us who live in intense fear on a daily basis. Some will go home from this church today not to a place of happiness and peace but to a place of disharmony and violence.

We call on all people to live this time of Advent in peace and harmony and to call attention to the reality that domestic violence undermines and destroys the family.

The Homily Notes below are written to aid sermons and reflections and to accompany the various Church materials on domestic violence during the Season of Advent.

Homily Notes

Homily Reflection Notes on the 1st Sunday of Advent – 28th November 2010

Second Reading: Rom: 13: 11-14.

• The readings of today, especially the second reading taken from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, states that the time to wake from sleep is now, [the time to be transformed is now] the night should be over [sinfulness should be no more] and the works of darkness must be thrown away [including an end to domestic violence]. We should embrace salvation which is nearer than we expected. This reading is reminding us that the time to be transformed and live by God’s precepts is today not tomorrow. We are urged to wake from sleep and the night of sin and come to embrace the light of Christ who chases away all darkness. Violence is darkness, and many of our homes and relationships are shrouded

Where there is violence and fear, love is not there.

in this darkness which must be uprooted from our families and communities so that we can truly prepare a way for the Lord of Peace.

• The reading highlights the sins that are a scourge on our families and on our communities. Drunkenness, promiscuity, lust, jealousy, revenge, selfishness and greed are present in our lives. All of these are types of domestic violence that contribute to the breakdown of family and right relationship.

• The family should be a place of love and nurturing, not a place of aggression and fear. In his writings after the Synod of Africa, Pope John Paul II used Holy Scripture to affirm that

¹John Paul II, Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 40: AAS81 (1989)

the family is one of the key elements in God's plan as "the primary place of 'humanisation' for the person and society" and the "cradle of life and love".¹ It is in the family that one learns to love, to care, to relate, to work and to hold dear all the values that makes us part of the Kingdom of God. God does not intend for us to live in families of violence and intimidation. But rather God desires us to flourish in families in which love of God and love of others guides our every action and thought.

- The basic responsibility of families is to foster and nurture life and to be examples and role models of peace for our children. The effects of domestic violence on children are severe. Domestic violence creates a culture of fear within our children, affects their school performance, damages their self esteem and begins cycles of violence that affects our young people for generations.

- The mission of a family is to fulfill Gods Reign of love and peace in the world. All forms of violence and especially domestic violence prevent this Reign of God. We need to all know that any form of violence, whether it be physical, sexual, emotional, is not love. Where there is violence and fear, love is not there. God created us in His own image and each person is a creature of God. Therefore the existence of domestic violence in the family or community distorts that image and likeness of God that exists in a human person. Therefore the suffering inflicted on the victims of domestic violence is directly inflicted on God.

- Our Church poster contains the scripture quote 'Let the Peace of Christ rule in your

hearts' – Colossians 3:15

This is the call for us this Advent: to be makers of peace not makers of violence. Then we can say that we are preparing a way for the Lord. Jesus was born and lived in a happy and peaceful family. The challenge for all of us as we prepare to welcome Him into our lives this Advent is to become more like the Holy Family of our Lord and to ensure that peace reigns in our hearts, in our homes and in our communities. Living in a peaceful, loving family is a choice. Even in our homes where there has been conflict, disharmony

or violence, there is the possibility of change. We can all choose to let peace rule our hearts, and our Lord calls us to do that today.



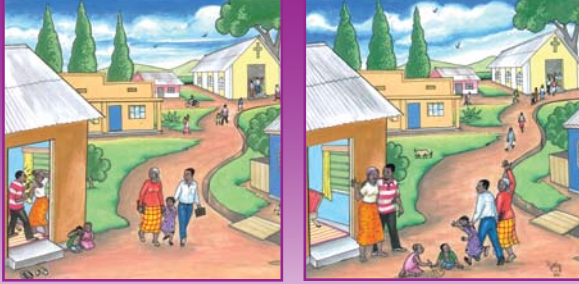
- Domestic violence continues to shatter the family, and we should understand that what shatters the family shatters the Church, the state and society at large. The Church carries a great responsibility for the wellbeing of society and part of its mission is to transform society into a better place for everyone. As a Church Community we are called to see the

reality of domestic violence in our parishes. We are called to stand with the suffering, pray, offer refuge, help those experiencing violence, and challenge the presence of this violence in our families and communities. We are all called to "Let the Peace of Christ rule in our hearts" and take action to prevent violence as we remember that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and when one member of the body of Christ is hurting we all hurt. Today we must ask ourselves, are we answering God's call for peace? This Advent let us commit to creating a happier, more peaceful and loving family and community.

Peace Be With Us All

Catholic Church Calls on Parishioners to Live their Faith

"Let the Peace of Christ rule in your Hearts"
(Colossians 3:15)



Peace begins with you – End Domestic Violence



Our Advent Prayer Cards for Peace

As part of our preparation for the birth of Jesus, we are asked to reflect and pray together as a family. The family that prays together becomes a stronger more unified family.

The Prayer Card available to you is a Prayer of Peace to call upon the Lord to enter our hearts and bring his peace and love into our families and into our homes.

We are asked to use the Prayer Card each day of this Season of Advent in preparation for bringing the light of Christ into our lives.

Our Advent Family Prayer

God of Peace, we take refuge in You.

Behold our family here, listen to our prayer and grant us Your perfect peace and protection.

Every act of violence and fighting in our family, our home and our community destroys Your reign of love and peace.

Strengthen in me a renewed sense of respect, love and forgiveness for all my family and friends, my neighbours, my community, and all life that You have created.

Pour love and peace into my heart and grant me the vision to recognize Your spirit in everyone around me, in all

times and in all places. Help me to love others as You love us.

May our hearts and minds be healed, and may we all find our way to You, Our God who brings us from violence to peace, from fear to love.

May I play my part in ending violence in all its forms by realising that peace and harmony begins with me and with my family.

May all glory be to You our Lord and God, whose power of the Holy Spirit working in us can do more than we can ask or imagine.

