

A Sea of Violence: Women seek safety's shores

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women who are being abused, noted Ecker.

"Good Catholic women are being abused by good Catholic men in good Catholic homes," explained Ecker, who has served women at Bethany House for seven years. "We as a society don't want to believe this about ourselves. We just want to keep believing in motherhood, apple pie and all that."

Ecker said women should be aware of warning signs common to abusers, and should not ignore these warnings. Among these signs are alcohol or drug abuse, a family history of violence, a fascination with guns or knives, prejudice, reckless driving, mistreatment of animals and extreme jealousy.

"The writing will always be on the wall," remarked Allison, who has learned about these signs firsthand.

But Allison, now 44, admits that she was more naive in her younger days. Ten years ago, when she first met the man who became her boyfriend — and later her abuser — Allison thought she finally had found her "Prince Charming."

"It's part of the sales pitch," she remarked. "They tell you they will love you like you've never been loved before."

Allison noted that an abuser will go to any lengths to lure a woman into a false sense of security. He will buy her flowers, shower her with compliments and even promise her the world, she said.

"These guys are good talkers. If they were salesmen, they would be millionaires," commented Allison, who is still haunted by her abusive partner.

Sarah also remains tormented by a violent mate. When she met her husband at age 15, she thought he was her savior. And even though he began abusing her during their courtship, she said she thought marriage somehow would stop the cycle.

"He promised he would stop if I married him," said Sarah, 23, who is currently in hiding from her husband of six years. "Now I'm afraid for my life. You never

lose that fear."

Although Sarah has sought help from the authorities, she said the police are not always thorough when it comes to explaining the rights of a battered woman.

"The problem is we don't know what our rights are," lamented Sarah. "The judge actually asked me what I did to provoke my husband."

Yet Allison emphasized the importance of reporting cases of domestic violence to the police. Even if women are not ready to press charges, Allison said they should notify the authorities of the violence that has occurred. In that way, if they ever decide to press charges, the proper documentation will be on file, she said.

"I'm not an expert. I'm not a professional. I've just been there," Allison said.

Anthony Sciolino is a professional with regard to resolving abusive family situations. A Family Court judge in Monroe County, Sciolino said he decided more than 200 cases of domestic violence in August of 1991 alone.

"We have seen an explosive number of cases and each year the number of cases goes up," the judge said.

Sciolino said a woman has two choices if she is married to, was married to or shares a child with a batterer: she can take her case to family court or she can prosecute the abuser in a criminal court.

The aim of family court is to resolve the problem, often by ordering the batterer to seek counseling. The purpose of criminal court is to convict the abuser.

"A woman has to decide whether she wants to continue the relationship or whether she wants out of the relationship entirely," noted Sciolino.

On average, abused women return to their abusive mates three to 15 times before deciding to leave them permanently, according to Phyllis Korn. The executive director of Alternatives for Battered Women in Rochester, Korn said the reasons for staying are many.

Korn cited shame, economic hardship, self-blame, depression, children and a sense of helplessness as the most common

reasons for staying. Once they decide to leave, she said, it is important for women to seek the support of others who share their circumstances, either at a shelter or in a support group.

Although the authorities often suggest joint counseling to resolve domestic violence, Korn said joint therapy is not a workable alternative.

"Both people are not to blame for the violence," Korn said, noting that the abuser is the one who needs to seek counseling.

Nonetheless, Caryn recalled that she often blamed herself for the violence. In fact, one of her children suggested that if she were to change, her husband might stop beating her.

"I had been trying to change for 28 years, and it didn't make a difference," remarked Caryn. "At that point, there was nothing left of me to change."

Caryn said she tolerated abuse for more than 25 years for the sake of her children. She left her husband for the first time shortly after the birth of her second daughter, but returned in a few months because "he said he would be a good person."

Five years later, after the birth of her third child, Caryn again packed her bags. But she returned to her husband two years later because she felt guilty about denying her children the chance to grow up in a traditional family setting.

"I kept telling myself that after the last one graduates (from high school) then I will leave," recalled Caryn. "I just became very involved in my children's lives in order to bury all this."

Two years before her last child was to graduate, Caryn's husband beat her so badly that she had to be taken to the emergency room. Instead of returning home, she spent the next two weeks in a shelter for battered women.

"They saved my life," recalled Caryn, who gained independence from her abusive spouse after that incident.

Lynn Reid Perkins agreed with Caryn that shelters can be a life saver for women drowning in a sea of domestic violence.

The executive director of Steuben Church-people Against Poverty, Inc., Perkins said that the demand for emergency housing in Steuben County was so great that a new shelter was opened in Bath on Sept. 9.

In 1990, Perkins said, 83 Steuben County residents sought shelter from abusive situations. The number of reported cases is increasing rapidly because women now know they can get assistance, she said.

But the problem of domestic violence demands a better solution than temporary shelters for victims, she said. Society needs to be educated about the evil of domestic violence, Perkins remarked.

"We need social change because this is a human-rights issue," she explained. "Why does society always make a woman feel like she needs a man?"

In addition, Perkins said the media has to become more sensitive to the issue of violence. Movies and television often portray violence in a way that sanctions violence as a healthy way to act out anger or aggression, she said.

Father Matthew Kawiak, parochial vicar at St. Boniface Parish, likewise observed that the church must teach people that violence should never be tolerated — especially in the home.

Father Kawiak, who has counseled many battered women, said that Scripture passages speaking of submissiveness and keeping peace in the home can confuse a woman.

"The church says to foster relationships, but the church never said we are supposed to endure violence and abuse in our relationships," the priest explained.

In their pastoral ministry, priests should be aware of the resources that are available to help women stop the cycle of abuse, Father Kawiak said, noting that the church should help women develop skills — especially self-esteem — that will enable them to become financially independent.

Ecker agreed that the church needs to address the issue of domestic violence, but she pointed out that priests may have difficulty dealing with all aspects encompassed by the problem.

"Women don't tend to go to priests because they are not sure if they can talk to a male figure," remarked Ecker. "I would love to see more women in the church available to meet with battered women."

An even better tactic, according to Terry Reeder, is educating women to avoid abusive relationships in the first place.

The director of campus ministry at Nazareth Academy, Reeder emphasized the importance of teaching the concept of human dignity to women at an early age. A strong sense of self-esteem may protect women from ever encountering an abusive partner, she said.

"We need to take a holistic look at young women and their unlimited worth and dignity before God," Reeder noted.

Caryn said she now realizes the worth of her own dignity. She has spent the last decade recovering the self-esteem her abusive husband stripped away from her. Now that she has made a new life for herself, she urged all women suffering from violence in their homes to get out.

Although picking up the pieces has not always been an easy process, Caryn said rediscovering herself has been a beautiful experience.

"You can't sit back after something like this happens; you have to put yourself out there," said Caryn, who stressed that a woman should never blame herself for the abusive actions of her mate.

In addition, she said that dealing with the inner pain is an integral part of the healing process.

"I don't hate him (my husband). Carrying that baggage around only hurts the one who hates," explained 60-year-old Caryn.

"But I pity him because I had a lot of love to offer him. I would have worshipped at his feet if he had only been kind," she said.

Obituaries

Brother Paschal Galligan; founding member of abbey

PIFFARD — A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Aug. 24, 1991, for Brother Paschal (William) Galligan, OCSO, at the Abbey of the Genesee. Father John Eudes Bamberger, the abbot of the abbey, served as celebrant.

Brother Paschal died of cancer on Friday, Aug. 23, 1991, in the abbey infirmary. He was 67.

Born in New York City on Feb. 21, 1924, Brother Paschal graduated from Brooklyn Tech before attending Fordham University. He joined the U.S. Naval Air Force after World War II broke out, serving in the Pacific theater from 1942-45.

On Oct. 4, 1947, he entered the Cistercian order at Our Lady of Gethsemani

Monastery in Kentucky. He professed his simple vows on April 10, 1950.

He left Gethsemani for Piffard on April 4, 1951, when he became one of the founding members of Our Lady of the Genesee Monastery. He made his solemn profession at the abbey on April 12, 1953.

Since 1984, Brother Paschal had served as the porter of the monastery, greeting guests at Masses and community prayers. He was a close friend of Rochester City Councilwoman Maxine Childress Brown, a regular visitor to the monastery.

After Brother Paschal was diagnosed with cancer in 1990, Brown drove him to St. Mary's Hospital for weekly chemotherapy treatments.

"He had a childlike innocence about him, which was reflected in how he related to people," Brown recalled. "He was extraordinarily perceptive and insightful, and he had a quick wit."

Although Brother Paschal was a large man, "He had an unusually gentle and peaceful spirit," said Brother Augie Jackson, OSCO. "He never threw his weight around."

Brother Paschal is survived by one sister, Mary Galligan Kennedy, of Ridge-wood, N.Y., and several nieces and nephews.

Interment was in the monastery's cemetery.

— Lee Strong

Sister Mary Edmond Gauthier, served at Notre Dame for 27 years

ROCHESTER — Sister Mary Edmond Gauthier, RSM, who served on the faculty of Elmira Notre Dame High School for 27 years, died of leukemia on Friday, Sept. 6, 1991, in Lourdes Hall Infirmary at the Mercy Motherhouse. She was 73.

Born in Southbridge, Mass., on Sept. 20, 1917, Sister Edmond entered the Mercy order on Sept. 4, 1933. At that time, she was a 15-year-old student at Our Lady of Mercy High School.

On June 2, 1934, she was received into the Mercy novitiate. She professed her final vows on Aug. 26, 1939.

Sister Edmond graduated from Mercy in June, 1935. She received a bachelor of arts degree in English from Nazareth College in 1939. She also received a bachelor's de-

gree in 1944 and a master's degree in 1945, both in library science from St. John's University in Brooklyn.

In addition, Sister Edmond studied at Catholic University, St. Bonaventure University and Elmira College.

After teaching English and serving as a librarian at Mercy from 1938-54, Sister Edmond taught at the former Elmira Catholic High School from 1954-55; at Notre Dame from 1955-62; and at Cardinal Mooney High School from 1962-67.

From 1967-68, Sister Edmond was a librarian at the former Catherine McAuley College run by the Sisters of Mercy in Rochester. She served as an English teacher at Mercy from 1968-71, before returning to Elmira Notre Dame in 1971.

In 1977, she became the full-time librarian at Notre Dame. She also instituted the school yearbook *Credo*. Sister Edmond also was moderator of the National Honor Society. She coordinated many of Notre Dame's fundraising events, among them the annual magazine drive.

Sister Edmond served on numerous congregational committees and was director of the Mercy temporary professed sisters from 1953-54.

She is survived by one sister, Ann Wright of Melbourne Beach, Fla.; several nieces, nephews and cousins.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Sept. 9 in the Motherhouse chapel. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.