

NO MORE 1 IN 3! – 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM 2020



Are you walking on eggshells? What has been happening in Ireland in 2020? Sad to report - domestic abuse incidents in Ireland continue to increase. Pandemic times have brought to the surface what is now termed by the World Health Organisation, a “shadow pandemic”. In Ireland alone Women’s Aid has seen a 43% increase in calls to their helplines since March 2020. It is estimated one in three women and girls worldwide experience gender based violence, including domestic abuse.



The PSNI respond to a domestic abuse incident every 17 minutes and Divisional Protective Services Units have been rolled out in all Garda divisions. In effect, specially trained officers are now available across the island to ensure that when victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence present to the PSNI or the Gardaí – at perhaps their most vulnerable moment – they are met with professional and expert assistance.

Refuge services and helplines tirelessly work to provide help, support and guidance to victims past and present. Community engagement and advocacy play an important role in combatting and supporting victims of domestic

abuse and gender based violence.

In this Mothers’ Union continues to play its role through advocacy, prayer and practical matters. Each year, beginning on the 25th November, *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women* and ending on the 10th December, *International Human Rights Day*, we are actively engaged in the international campaign, the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence*.



Throughout the year branches support refuges, according to local needs, providing items and vouchers for families that have just arrived to home start packs. The response from members has been phenomenal.



CRITiCALL is a new initiative to support people emerging from domestic violence circumstances compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. Starting in Dublin and spreading to volunteer centres in other counties, CRITiCALL coordinate donations of items and deliver directly to refuges. People have volunteered their holiday home or second property as a safe haven and letters of courage and hope are welcomed for those emerging from domestic abuse. Mothers’ Union is delighted to have assisted in getting a CRITiCALL drop off centre up and running in Cork.

Advocacy in 2020 has included calling on the Northern Ireland Assembly to hasten the introduction of the *Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill* and in the Republic of Ireland to encourage further resourcing to enable the full implementation of all aspects of the *Domestic Violence Act 2018*. This work is ongoing.

Leading assemblies and workshops in secondary schools is stalled at the present time. Schools Mothers’ Union have engaged with will be receiving 16 Days bookmarks. Each member will also receive two bookmarks and is invited to pass one onto another person. Why?

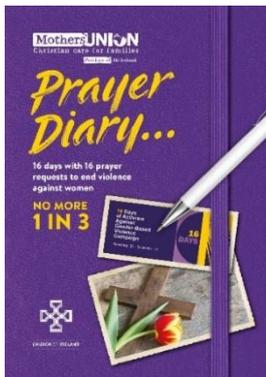
Well, experience has taught us that keeping the conversation going is pivotal to keeping domestic abuse high on the agenda. Individually we may not create a huge impact, but as Mother Teresa, reminded us *we can do small things with great love*. Together, our actions contribute to the creation

of safe spaces, openness and understanding. Together we can challenge the stigma surrounding domestic abuse, tackle the root causes and offer better supports.

Members are encouraged to wear black each Thursday. This is a simple visual reminder that not only does abuse happen, it is endemic in our society. *Thursdays in Black* is a commitment in prayer and deed to tackle abuse and at its root. The cloth won't do anything in itself but our attitudes and actions will.



In 2020 the annual *All-Ireland Mothers' Union 16 Days Prayer Vigil* is moving from a series of dedicated events to individual homes. Mothers' Union have produced a *16 Days Prayer Diary* which highlights the issues involved, together with the positive work taking place across the Church of Ireland in highlighting and combatting domestic abuse and gender-based violence.



The *16 Days Prayer Diary* is informative, and thought-provoking, drawing its readers into reflection and prayer accompanied by simple points of action

A copy can be downloaded at <http://www.mothersunion.ie/files/16-Days-Prayer-Diary-for-Interactive.pdf>. Copies may also be ordered from Mothers' Union by contacting allireland.mothersunion@gmail.ie. Postage costs will apply.

Worldwide, in 2020 Mothers' Union is hosting a **Global Day of Action** on Saturday 5th December. This Global Day is centred around that disturbing statistic that "1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced domestic or sexual abuse". Mothers' Union, as a leading women's organisation, believes this to be unacceptable.

We, male and female, are created equal and, as Christians, we are destined to portray God's kingdom in love. Jesus came that we might have life to the full – may we continue to work resolutely towards this goal in 2021.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

The 16 Days of Activism and Global Day of Action will be framed in the context of prayer and action with a series of online events:

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

Wednesday 25th November: Online Morning Prayer ~ 8am

– worship to mark the start of the 16 Days of Activism – Facebook Live and You Tube

Sunday 29th November:

Online Morning service from St. Brigid's Church, Castleknock

Speaker: Ifra Ahmed, Ambassador for fgm and gender based violence

Saturday 5th December: GLOBAL DAY OF ACTIVISM

Online Protest launch ~ 9am

– throughout MU social channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

Online "Cup of Tea for No More 1 in 3" ~ 11.30am

Join us with a cup of tea as we take time out our day to reflect and pray for our "No More 1 in 3 campaign" This will be followed by Midday Prayers – Facebook Live and You Tube

No More 1 in 3 Global Day Service ~ 8pm – Facebook Live and You Tube

<https://www.facebook.com/MothersUnion/>

Sunday 6th December:

16 Days online service from Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh – You Tube

Thursday 10th December:

Online Compline~ 8pm

– Worship to mark the close of the 16 Days of Activism - Facebook Live and You Tube

A Prayer of Intercession for inclusion in church services during the 16 Days of Activism:

*Loving Lord,
your care and love are ever present in our lives.
We pray for our brothers and sisters throughout the world
who live in situations of abuse and violence.*

*Give them hope in their hopelessness;
help them find strength in their weakness;
grant them freedom from their oppression;
transform their brokenness into wholeness;
and heal their wounds, visible and invisible.*

*Grant us all the courage and wisdom, grace and humility,
to act at all times with compassion and care.
And grant all who are harmed by abuse or coercion, peace through justice.
This we ask in Jesus name. Amen.*



A PRAYER FOR THOSE WORKING TO END SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

God bless you with insight to recognise violence in all its forms,
and courage to name it, speaking out for justice.

The Lord Jesus bless you with compassion for the vulnerable,
and grace to stand with them, sharing his strength.

The Holy Spirit bless you with a prayerful heart,
and power to breathe peace, transforming the world.

The blessing of the holy and glorious Trinity,
eternal Wisdom, living Word, abiding Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

(With thanks to the Anglican Church of Australia)