



Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence

The deafening shrill of a cicada symphony comes to an end. A colicky babe drifts off to sleep. Night has fallen. Quiet descends. Peace reigns. Ah, ***silence!***

A witness is bribed. News of a poison gas attack is suppressed by a government and its media. An employee is threatened with dismissal "if word were to get out." Ah, ***silenced!!***

A young teen notices her friend take an item from a store, but says nothing. An adult daughter, aware her father has relapsed, opts to "keep the peace." The elderly mother, of a 50-ish son with mental illness, hides in her home to avoid neighbors. Ah, the ***silent!!***

Silence can be a welcome state, but in some instances, as noted above, it can mean injustice, control, and the death of dreams. The discomfort, fear, embarrassment that gave the teen, daughter and mother pause and brought each to ***silence*** then may result in repeated thefts, delayed sobriety and a life of shame and isolation. Nothing will change until someone speaks up.

By its history, St. James has been about breaking ***silences***, raising subjects considered "taboo," and taking action. Not shying away from potential controversy or matters delicate, ministries and programs have formed, taken root and flowered. We have PADS, Peace & Justice, REST, Right to Life, SPRED, and St. Vincent de Paul to name a few. It was in this same spirit of "speaking out" that, two years ago, Fr. Chuck Dahm stood before us and broke the ***silence*** on domestic violence. He described its nature and scope and how St. Pius was responding. Days later, he met with a group of concerned parishioners. The baton was passed and ***Stepping Stones*** was born.

October is **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**. Beginning next weekend, ***Stepping Stones*** kicks off a four week campaign. On Oct. 5 and 6, our displays will feature ***silent*** victim silhouettes, resource materials and a parish prayer of non-violence. We will hand out purple ribbon stickers affixed to a card from which we will read during Mass. For ten days, campus trees, dressed with purple bands, will remind us all of the victims of domestic violence. Through our four-part series of bulletin articles, you will come to know of local and national support resources for the abused. We hope you will pray with us, read our materials and reflect on what we have to "say."

**Next weekend, in the spirit of support
for domestic violence victims,
please wear purple to Mass.**