

## A REFLECTION ON FAMILY VIOLENCE, BY THE REV. DR. LUIS A. CARLO

Dr. Carlo was a first responder to scenes of domestic violence during his 27-year career as a paramedic with the NY Fire Department. Since receiving his Ph.D. from Columbia University, and as the Associate Dean and Professor of Urban Studies and religion and Education at Alliance Theological Seminary in NYC, he speaks at numerous conferences, in seminary classrooms as well as from his Bronx pulpit. Dr. Carlo proposes justice instead of passivity as the corrective for violence. His reflection here (excerpted from a longer article) illustrates how crucial it is that we think theologically about the issue of domestic violence. (FaithTrust Institute intro, 2004)

Dr. Carlo: “God undoes chaos by giving the earth form, fullness, and life, shaping and filling the earth as a dwelling place for humans—male and female—created in the image of God. Design, harmony, order and life have come forth out of chaos, confusion and disorder. The peace of God is in all of creation.

But what is peace? In Hebrew, peace is shalom—not simply the absence of conflict, but the presence of wholeness, integrity, and completeness. Violence disrupts God’s design for humanity and creation. The believer is called to actively promote justice. The church must develop both short-term and long-term approaches. In the short-term, the safety of the victim and family members must be protected, and batterers must be held genuinely accountable for their violent actions. This can be accomplished first by listening and believing victims’ stories, and second by appropriate referral of all family members to agencies poised to provide immediate aid and long-term treatment.

But it is equally important for clergy to develop a long-range plan for ministering to the broken by becoming educated about abuse, wrestling with God and scripture, adopting policies that bring God’s peace through justice, and training leaders and congregations in implementing an appropriate response.

We must be a voice speaking into this issue—condemning all forms of advertisement, language, music, etc., that promote violence; preaching sermons, writing articles, and praying for victims of violence; educating our congregations and taking a clear stand against violence.

The church and clergy must look for deeper theological themes and truth to confront domestic violence with authority and love. We ministers must do our homework and not be satisfied with easy answers...Domestic violence is not only a physical or social crisis. It is a crisis of the human spirit and soul.”

Please contact Joan Fenton, [rifenton5@gmail.com](mailto:rifenton5@gmail.com) for information on workshops and classes.