

NJPN Comment in the Catholic Universe – Margate Clark: Women network for justice

The National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) has launched a new website for communication for women throughout England and Wales. It is also a platform for the Bishops' Conference England and Wales to hear the voices of Catholic women. Our committees cover a wide range of issues such as social justice, education, health, bio-ethics, ecumenical and interfaith, violence against women and international issues. Also, we have Diocesan Links, reaching women on the peripheries and communicating with their Bishops.

Working together and collaborating with organisations, including the National Justice and Peace Network, we come together as a strong collective Catholic voice to address areas of concern, advocate for change and transfer information. Our new website helps us communicate and link digitally with extensive networks. News and events are frequently listed and updated.

Currently, NBCW events are held online and all are welcome to join. International Women's Day on 8 March 2021 celebrated the tremendous efforts of women and girls around the world in shaping a more equitable future and recovery from the pandemic. Women stand at the front lines of the Covid-19 crisis as health care workers, care givers, innovators, community organisers, and as some of the most effective national leaders in combatting the pandemic. The crisis has also highlighted the disproportionate burdens that women carry.

Across the world, women are facing increased unpaid care duties, unemployment and poverty, all factors contributing to the increase in domestic violence during the pandemic. Coercive control, strangulation, domestic abuse of people with disabilities are just some of the horrendous abuses endured. We see and hear of these cases all around us in every strata of society and the NBCW encourages Catholic parishes to become places of safety for people seeking to escape domestic abuse, especially women and children.

The NBCW has produced a pastoral guide to raise awareness in the Church of the devastating effects of Domestic Abuse and offers practical guidance for responding. The resource pack 'Raising Awareness of domestic abuse' can be found in digital format on the NBCW website or hard copy booklet which can be obtained by leaving a message on the NBCW website or by contacting 01642 782111. It has been circulated via ad clerum to every parish. Meanwhile, the Domestic Abuse Bill is in the Report Stage, in the House of Lords on 8 March.

If you are interested in joining one of the Committees or helping with our work, contact can be made via the website www.nbcw.co.uk, or 01642 782111.

Margaret Clark is NBCW President.