**Reflection on Pope’s Francis’ Prayer intention for the month of February.**

For the month of February Pope Francis has asked the Church, and indeed ALL people, to pray for an end to worldwide violence towards women.

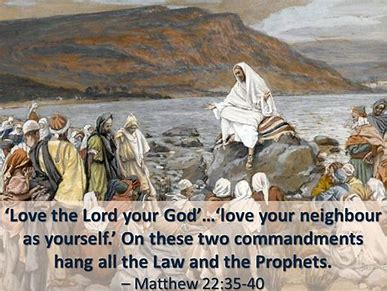
Violence towards women can and does take numerous forms, all of which Pope Francis calls a "degradation towards humanity. " Using statistics from the UN, Pope Francis informs us that EVERY day 137 women are killed by members of their own family and one in three women will experience some form of physical or sexual assault in their lifetime. Of all people worldwide who are trafficked, over half are adult women who are often bought and sold into sex industries and held against their will. Pope Francis reminds us that the worldwide pandemic has made already vulnerable women even more vulnerable.  These women remain vulnerable.

It can be natural at times to read such figures and think "well that happens in other places, not here in Staffordshire!"

Yet, we know, deep down that this is not true. The Sentinel this week released a news article saying reports of domestic abuse rose by 10% during the first lockdown. Worrying statistics close to home and also, perhaps for some of you reading this, these statistics include you or someone you love.

But what can you do in the face of such hatred and violence? It's easy to feel overwhelmed and insignificant in the face of such hostility. Well, the first thing and the BEST thing you can do is **act out of love**. Love for yourself and love for one another. If you are reading this and know that you are included in these statistics, regardless of you being a women or a man, then please reach out and seek support, it will be there. All of us here at in are Archdiocese are a united family and we WILL help you.

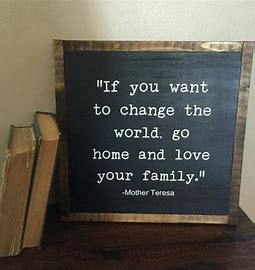
For those of us lucky enough to not be included in these figures, then we must also act. **We must act out of love.**  When Jesus was asked which of the 613 commandments was the most important he replied very simply. The most important commandment of all is LOVE. Love God and Love your neighbour.



The only way we can ever truly defeat evil is through love. Jesus' death and resurrection PROVES this to us. Jesus' death is an act of pure love, defeating and destroying death for ever.

So, today the message is simple. In the face of hatred, act in love. For ALL those suffering from violence, let us pray united as a family, pray that the violence will end and love with flourish.

When St. Teresa of Calcutta collected her Nobel peace prize, her response to a reporter when asked what each individual person could do to bring peace was simple.... let us do the same today and everyday.



We are one family. Thank you for the love that is shared.

With love and gratitude