



## TRAINING REFLECTION FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2020

### OPENING PRAYER

### INTRODUCTION:

In preparation for our upcoming AIC International Assembly 2020, which will be held in March in Bogota, Colombia, we have decided to dedicate this training reflection (to be studied during the months of January and February 2020) to the important topic of:

### “VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN”

The **UN** (United Nations) provides shocking global figures on this issue:

- 60% of all children not in school are **girls**.
- 2/3 of all illiterate adults are **women**.
- Only 14% of positions of responsibility are held by **women**.
- Only 10% of parliamentary seats are occupied by **women** (although in almost all continents the political power of women is generally increasing).
- 40-50% of **female** workers have encountered some form of sexual harassment, or unwanted sexual behavior in the workplace.
- **1 in 5 women** experiences violence from her partner.
- 95% of all acts of violence against **women** occur in the victim’s own home.
- There are a high number of feminicides.
- 85% of single parent families are run by a **woman**.
- The number of early pregnancies and teenage **mothers** has increased.
- Very few countries have a **female** President.
- In gender relations between men and women there are almost always unequal opportunities, differences in salaries and **women** abandoned by their husbands.
- Access to the world of work is difficult for **women** with problems.
- Unlike men, **women** (almost always for cultural reasons) interrupt their studies and not starting them again means they “remain behind”.

## DETAILED ANALYSIS:

When we see these scary figures, it is important to remind ourselves of Jesus's attitude to women, who were traditionally poor, oppressed and marginalized. He valued them, took them into account, recognized their dignity and taught them just as he taught men. Here are some examples:

- His first miracle, the conversion of water into wine, was requested by his most holy mother, the Virgin Mary (John 2:1-12);
- The dialogue with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-45);
- The Pharisee and the sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50);
- The widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17);
- The beautiful text about the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11).

Now let's go back to the origins of our Association (the year 1617, more than 400 years ago). **Women** in the age of our Founders **were also victims of violence and marginalization**. However, following the example of Jesus Christ, both Saint Vincent and Saint Louise sought to bring out **women's capacities** in a very special way. We can say for sure that Saint Vincent de Paul invented volunteering and that he entrusted ordinary **women** with extraordinary work to help people living in situations of poverty and exclusion. Saint Louise de Marillac, his great collaborator, also gave a huge amount of help in terms of education, meaning that **girls** learned to read. We can proudly say that both were **pioneers** of some of the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals**.

Nowadays **women** continue to suffer from different forms of poverty. The most common are: discrimination and lack of respect of their rights, illiteracy, **violence**, lack of food security and lack of access to education and employment, among others. Today we are going to focus on **VIOLENCE**.

### ➔ *What is domestic violence?*

All kinds of physical, psychological and/or sexual abuse or mistreatment that take place within the family or domestic unit or in any interpersonal relation where the aggressor lives or has lived in the same place as the woman.

A worrying increase in domestic violence has been detected. The home is sometimes the most dangerous place for women and often a place of torture and cruelty.

### → *Types of violence:*

- **Physical:** Manifested in hitting, pushing, punching, kicking, burning, slapping, strangulation, aggression with weapons, endangering life, refusing to help a woman when she is ill, etc.
- **Psychological or Emotional:** Some forms of threat of harm, physical and emotional isolation, exaggerated jealousy, possessiveness, humiliation, insults, constant criticism, accusations, lies, contempt, social disqualification, etc.
- **Sexual:** The perpetrator attempts to make the woman submit to sexual acts against her will; persists in sexual activity when the woman is not fully conscious, did not consent or is frightened; physically hurts her during the sexual act; uses denigrating sexual insults, etc.
- **Economic or Financial:** Excluding the woman from managing day-to-day expenses, concealment, theft of women's money, economic dependence, etc.

All these kinds of violence, suffered regularly, have consequences such as fear, isolation, shame, decreased self-esteem, emotional dependence and the appearance of somatic, psychological and/or psychiatric symptoms.

The possible **causes of violence** range from sexism in society to belonging to families that use violence as a way of learning.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Since 1975, International Woman's Year, AIC has made a great effort to train and raise the awareness of its members about this major form of poverty. This effort has continued tirelessly and has resulted in various documents, workshops and training reflections on the topic and in national, regional and international seminars (1980, Colombia; 1984, Costa Rica; 1985, Dominican Republic; 1999, Spain; 2000, Brazil; ASD-2007, Italy).

Since the seminars in Spain and Brazil, AIC has undertaken important work to denounce injustices, fight against all types of **violence suffered by women and defend their rights**. To this end, a manifesto on **violence against women** was written and circulated, a manifesto that seeks to raise awareness of and prevent violence at global level.

Since then, the members of AIC, through different platforms, in civil society, governments and the international bodies where we have representatives (including in the UN), have been working hard to find a solution to this terrible reality, always fighting in favor of **women** and against **violence**. This is also why, in 2003, AIC began awarding the Claire and Jean Delva Prize for projects fighting violence against women.

### **AIC SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:**

- 1.** Read and comment on the Biblical texts mentioned in this reflection.
- 2.** Reflect in groups on this important topic of **Violence against Women** and respond to the following questions:
  - a)** Among the services that you offer, have you thought about working with women who have been victims of violence and on preventing violence?
  - b)** What projects do you have in your groups that promote the financial independence of women?
  - c)** What types of violence have your beneficiaries experienced?
  - d)** Taking our Vincentian roots into account, how have you responded to this type of problem?
  - e)** In almost all cities there are institutions that offer hospitality to victims of violence or exploitation, and places where psychological, social reintegration or work and study support is given. Do you know where these places are so that you can direct victims of violence to them if necessary?

### **FINAL PRAYER**