

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

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TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by S. Casarotto, CS 4/26/09

CHILD ABUSE

Statistics provided by Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children and Families (2006) stated that 3.3 million reports were made to child protective services in the United States. As a result, about 905,000 children were found to be victims of child abuse and/or neglect. Of those, 1,000 children died as a result of abuse. However, experts believe that the actual number of incidents of abuse and neglect is 3 times higher than reported.

Locally, in 2008 the Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS) received 10,414 reports of suspected abuse and/or maltreatment, of these 20 were reports of child fatalities. This is an all time record of reports of suspected child abuse and child fatalities for Erie County.

The District Attorney of Erie County reported that in 2004 there were 4,500 domestic violence related arrests, while four domestic violence related homicides occurred in the same year. The suburbs are not immune to this crisis: Kenmore recorded 398 Domestic Incidents Reports; North Tonawanda, 457; Cheektowaga 1,699; Depew, 128 and East Aurora, 61.

A 2001 Domestic Violence Survivor Study conducted by the Erie County Coalition Against Family Violence indicated that 66% of survivors were active members of their religious communities (47% identified themselves as Catholics) but, sadly, 84% of these said they did not seek support or assistance from religious institutions.

These are alarming statistics which demand serious consideration and community action. It is a well documented fact that abused children are more likely to become abusive adults. It is also a fact that in time of economic crisis, pressure and pent-up emotions erupt in violence especially against the most vulnerable: women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. It is important not to dismiss or minimize the warning signs of trouble: frequent and uncontrolled anger, drinking, drugs and other escapes. This is particularly true in the current economic crisis.

Family members, friends and neighbors have the obligation to help people get the help they need and to prevent possible victims.

Pagan Rome could teach our violent society: "*Maxima cura puero debetur*", to a child we must provide the greatest care and protection.