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Pope Francis speaks into a microphone while sitting in a white chair and holding a paper

Pope Francis talks to visitors during his weekly general audience Nov. 8, 2023, in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

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Calling violence against women a "poisonous weed" that must be eradicated, Pope Francis also told the media that their campaigns to stop the violence often are offset by the way they glorify a person's ability "to attract and dominate the other."

"In too many places and too many situations, women are put in the background, they are considered 'inferior,' objects; and when a person is reduced to a thing, then one no longer sees her dignity, she is considered just property that can be used in any way and even killed," the pope said in a message read on Italy's RAI 1 radio station Nov. 9.

The radio and a shelter for abused women in Milan planned a full day of broadcasts to educate the public about the ongoing problem of violence against women.

To combat the violence, the pope said, one must go to the roots, which "are cultural and mental and grow in the dirt of prejudice, possession and injustice."

"How many women are overwhelmed by the burden and drama of violence," he said. "How many are mistreated, abused, enslaved, victims of bullying by those who think they can dispose of their bodies and their lives, forced to surrender to the greed of men."

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The media, he said, "still play an ambiguous role" by championing women's rights sometimes but also continuously glamorizing "hedonism and consumerism, whose models, both male and female, follow the criteria of success, self-assertion, competition and the power to attract and dominate the other."

"Where there is domination, there is abuse," Francis said. "Love does not demand prisoners."

People of goodwill cannot not remain indifferent or silent when so many women are suffering violence, abuse and exploitation, he said.

An added consideration for Catholics, he said, is knowing that "from the heart and flesh of a woman, salvation entered the world."

"How we treat women, in all her dimensions, reveals our level of humanity," Francis said.