



Hello ladies of St. Mary's,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Catholic Women's League Council of our parish.

If you are keeping up with all of the many multimedia opportunities of today, you will know that it is easy to become overwhelmed. Information and opinions are everywhere and it can be difficult to know what to think and believe. As Christians we know with confidence that our faith remains our best guide through all of it.

One hundred and one years ago, Catholic women of Canada recognized this. They saw a need to come together "For God and Country". The CWL National League was formed just after the brutality of World War 1 and the destruction and chaos of the Spanish Flu Pandemic. The organization quickly fulfilled a social and spiritual need. Over the last century, the League has also shown that the collective voices of women across Canada and around the world can make a difference politically.

For example, "Since 1934, 157 resolutions have been adopted by the national council under the [Education and Health] standing committee alone. The topics range from seat belts, abortion, genetic engineering, disposal of nuclear waste, recycling of waste, breast cancer, organ and tissue donation awareness, palliative care, environmental concerns, water quality in Canada and anti-bullying programs to name a few." (The Canadian League, Page 12, Volume 96/No 3/Fall 2020)

Over the years, the Christian Family Life standing committee has focused on marriage and the family, sanctity of life, ministry to youth, the disabled, seniors and widowed, separated or divorced women, protection of all human life, with gun control laws, as well as relationships with and in support of Indigenous peoples.

The Community Life standing committee directed their attention toward "denouncing human rights abuses, protection and support for victims of human trafficking...becoming informed about the root causes of violence and pursuing prevention strategies." "Since 1974, delegations have met with federally Elected officials, their policy advisors and staff, and sometimes senators, to lobby for issues of social and economic justice." (The Canadian League, Page 14, Volume 96/No 3/Fall 2020).

There is strength in numbers; 75,000 women across Canada if you want to be a part of bigger change.

Perhaps your interest is closer to home though; like supporting our own parish. At St. Mary's, you have sampled our homemade Christmas cookies, perhaps attended our first annual chilli cook off or our information nights. If any of you have had the privilege of helping Mary Van Gentevoort and Toni TenDen make their delicious mile-high apple pies in the fall or soup meals on Good Friday, you know that our members create opportunities where everyone is welcome; everyone learns and laughs a lot.

The CWL is all of this and so much more.

Spiritual Development opportunities are probably the most important aspect for us women on the ground. Sharing prayer with other women of faith in North Bay at their monthly spiritual event, special retreats from Ottawa during Advent and Lent etc have provide the boost we need to spread the Good News of hope and love. When we can meet together again, you won't want to miss our annual retreat and convention days.

It is our hope, that The League of 2022 and beyond will continue these wonderful established traditions while adapting to make the organization meet the needs of Catholic women today, regardless of age or stage of life. Despite only being able to meet via zoom during this pandemic, your St. Mary's council has continued to meet monthly. Our "Bakeless Bake Sale" last spring was a great adaptation and a success. For those who do not have computer access, we have started a Companionship Program to share information and reduce isolation for our fellow parishioners.

November marks the beginning of our 2022 Membership Drive. We will be introducing our own Welcome Kit which will include member telephone interviews so that we can make the most of all of the time and talent in our parish and fine-tune our efforts on your behalf. Current and new members will be getting a phone call from one of our volunteers. Some ladies may just have time right now to support the League with their membership fee. Others may want to be more involved. All are welcome.

Father Randy and Deanne jumped right on board with our membership goals by ordering Blue CWL envelopes for our offertory boxes. This will make it easier for you to remember that even though meetings run from September to June, **fees are due in January** for the year ahead. The boxes will be distributed in December.

Membership is \$25.00 and can be paid by cheque (made payable to St. Mary's CWL), cash or e-transfer (stmarycwl169@gmail.com)

With participation at mass down, the church in Canada needs us now even more than it did 100 years ago. Our parish needs us. Father Randy needs us. Religion has been at the centre of some very dark periods in its history but never more so than in this century. We need to face all of that and do better. As Bishop Robert Barron says in his Word on Fire messages, this is not the time to run from our suffering church but toward it. The CWL provides an opportunity to do this as a strong and dedicated group.

Unfortunately, St. Mary's CWL membership is at an all-time low, due at least in part to the loss of quite a number of long time members and the confusion wrought by the pandemic. This is the case across Canada.

On October 26, of this year our St. Mary's Council was 98 years old, one of the oldest councils in the country. Let's start getting ready to celebrate our own 100 year Anniversary in 2023 now. Many hands make light, meaningful work towards our three pillars of "Faith, Service and Social Justice". I hope that many St. Mary's women 16 years of age and up will consider joining us and sharing your voices.

Your CWL President,
Sharon Forgeron