



THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA
TORONTO DIOCESAN COUNCIL
103rd Convention Oral Report
April 29 and 30, 2024
Ajax Convention Centre
550 Beck Road
"Called To Serve"

Name: Sue Lubowitz
Office: President

Dear Sisters in the League,

The new theme chosen by our National President, Shari Guinta has truly resonated with many of our members. It is taken, as you know, from Isaiah 6, verse 8. Alice Warford and the Scarborough choir used it as the offertory hymn on Monday and you all joined in because it is such a well-loved hymn.

How many of you have ventured to read all of Isaiah 6 since the theme was announced? Show of hands please. There is a lot of strong imagery in that passage. I'll leave it to you to read it later if you haven't done so yet.

Isaiah says "send me" and then waits for instructions from the Lord. He doesn't just say "I will go" and leave before he gets the "mission" or the "road map".

After God tells him the mission, Isaiah then asks the question that we all do the as members of the League. In verse 11 Isaiah asks the Lord: "For how long, Lord?"

This is where we find ourselves as a diocesan council, as parish councils and where the League has found itself before.

A few years ago, the world was under a worldwide pandemic. Things had to change to prevent the spread. I know what you are thinking but I'm speaking of 1918 and the pandemic was the Spanish Flu. The Spanish flu was the most severe pandemic of the 20th century and, in terms of total numbers of deaths, among the most devastating in human history. Outbreaks occurred in every inhabited part of the world, including isolated islands in the South Pacific. The second and third waves claimed the most lives, with about half the deaths occurring among healthy 20- to 40-year-olds, an unusual mortality age pattern for influenza.

Our beloved League was founded in 1920 under these circumstances by an amazing group of women who advocated for social justice and worked towards their greater spiritual development. There were years of financial depression, draughts, fires, a world war but the women of the League persevered and continued to meet and plan and serve.

The League has adapted and changed over the years and we are now at another crossroad in the history of the Toronto Diocesan Council with the end of this executive term and the election of a smaller executive later today.



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You may not know this, but being the President of the CWL in Toronto involves a lot of driving. A lot! Over my two year term, I think I have been to a majority of councils for either anniversary teas, funerals, elections, conflict resolution, discernment exercises, training, membership drives, presentations of Maple Leaf Service Pins and even a Bellelle Guerin pin, installation of new councils, regional meetings and of course the Unity Outreach Project. One of the outcomes of the Unity Outreach initiative was the 2 workshops for presidents and presidents-elect that I held in January. Combined we had almost 50 councils in attendance in person on 2 separate Saturdays and we all learned from each other.

Many times the return trip from those occasions was in the dark.

When we are driving at night towards a destination, we turn the car's headlights on, and **we can only see a few meters ahead** clearly. Anything beyond what is illuminated by the car's headlights is completely dark. And there are no guarantees that the road will take us to our destination. The road might be closed ahead, or there might be a diversion, or there might be some other unpredictable obstacle.

At times, you see the exit sign too late and are stuck on a different, sometimes longer road home.

Yet in this uncertainty, we continue driving and eventually reach our destination. Even if we experience obstacles along the way, we don't just stop and sit on the road. We find an alternate way and continue our journey towards our destination.

Someone who wasn't sure of the final destination was Abraham. Abraham is mentioned in the new theme prayer. He heard the call from God who said: "Go to the land I will show you." Like Abraham we are called to leave that which is familiar and go on the road to the place that God has prepared in the depths of our hearts. Along the way, we become more and more ourselves, the people God has wanted us to be from the beginning. And by following the call that is addressed to us, we become a blessing for our loved ones, our neighbours, and the world.

Our mission is our ministry. God has a plan for each of us, but you choose the road.

You have heard from others on the executive. When asked to take on our roles we all felt unready. In May of 2022, at the start of my presidency, a Life Member called to see how I was doing; I told her that it felt like trying to drink from a fire hose!



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If you feel that way when you take on a role remember that as a member of the CWL, you are called by name and you are the right person in the right place at the right time. God always gives you support along the way. One of our great supports these past two years has been Fr. Liborio.

Fr. Liborio was also new to his role. In his first set of fall regional meetings, he reminded us that to serve the Lord, we need to be both Martha and Mary. We shouldn't be too caught up with the constant work that needs to be done but we also need to be still and be with the Lord. His message resonated with members across the diocese. He was the right spiritual advisor at the right place and at the right time.

Going forward I would encourage councils to continue to incorporate more of the tools that national council has provided, to participate in as many events that the diocesan council will host, to reach out to others to nurture their talents and to make them feel welcome, to discover their role in the ministry of leadership.

My advice to the incoming executive is to continue the work of the Unity Outreach by visiting as many councils as possible in person.

We are called to bring our unique gifts to the service of the Lord. We are to become instruments in the building of God's kingdom.

When I took my place as your president, I used the theme "Called to Serve" as a focus for our executive. Later today, the Offertory Hymn will be from one of my favourite bible verses: Micah 6:8 and tells us that we are called to be:

- Light for the kingdom
- To act with justice
- To love tenderly
- To serve one another

Being your president was a great gift and allowed me to grow my faith, to get to know you better and to live out my call to serve in leadership and to witness our collective passion to live out our baptismal call.

For that I thank you and will continue to pray that Our Lady of Good Counsel continues to guide us on the right road.

My written report can be found on pages 3-4 of the 2023 Annual Report.

Respectfully submitted



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