**96th Annual National Convention Report**

**Halifax--August 13 thru 17th, 2016**

The Diocese of Halifax planned and hosted an excellent and memorable National Convention. There were over 700 in attendance and remarkably over 200 of them were first time National Convention attendees. There were 33 representatives from Alberta. Thank you to Edmonton Spiritual Advisor Father Jozef Wroblewski for attending and supporting us. A very special thanks to Archbishop Richard Smith for co-presiding at the Opening and Closing Masses for the convention. For me, attending the National Convention in Halifax was another wonderful occasion for enrichment, inspiration, renewal and empowerment. We were reminded that the strength of the CWL is rooted in our unity as a national organization.

The first convention speaker was Sister John Mary from Calgary who is with the Sisters of Life. She drew her first name from Cardinal John O’Connor who established the Order. She indicated that when the Sisters of Life were formed in 1991; the Order’s charism was to be *the protection of the sacredness of the human life.* Through prayer the sisters participate in changing the world. Motherood is an analogue for God’s mercy. The child becomes a mercy for the Mom. Sister John Mary showed us excerpts from the movie , ***Marie’s Story*** based on a true story of a nun in a boarding school who assists a girl who is both deaf and blind which poignantly illustrates the power of the “feminine genius” as put forward by Pope John Paul II…we are challenged to change the world one heart, one voice at a time.

Sister John Mary spoke of the 3 Postures of the Heart:

1. To Receive
2. To Delight
3. To persevere

We must be willing and to receive the message of the Holy Spirit. Only then can be delight and can change every aspect of life—we are open to delighting in others. We consider what special gifts do others have and mirror their good qualities.

To become involved is an act of love and mercy.

In his address, National Spiritual Advisor William McGrattan reminded us that the CWL continues to be parish based and parish focused.  He encouraged us to prepare for the future of the League by mentoring the next level. Our focus should be on welcoming new members…all women should feel welcome in the League even if they do not yet belong. Our compass should be the 8 Objectives of the League acknowledging that change can be difficult but sometimes necessary.

The Provincial Presidents gave their oral reports along with National President Barb Dowding. We also reviewed the finances of the League. Kim Scammel reported on what has been happening at the National office over the past year. There are 8 fulltime/part-time positions in the National Office. We were all given a new Finance Summary Book to take home and share. **She mentioned that parish council liability is now covered by National** and a reminder that **Feb 28th, is the cutoff for membership.**

**Father James Mallon** from the Diocese of Halifax spoke to us about parish renewal and evangelization…we should each think of ourselves as a mission.

What does this mean for the CWL?

* **Accommodation**: We must remember that faith is grounded in revelation. Cultures come and go but our faith should not. We should not strive to accommodate everyone as the church becomes irrelevant. Not good.
* **Opposition:** This encourages people to reinforce their own fears with lines clearly drawn. Not good.
* **Withdrawal:** Stance of no stance is self-serving and reduces the status of the church. Not good.

All of the above isolate the church.

* **Engagement:** We are asked to engage others to make discipleship the first CWL objective. We are asked to leave the safety of our homes and meet others. Do not simply provide information about Christ but allow other to encounter him through us.
* **How can we do this?**  Testimonies of conversion. Prayer breakfasts. Celebrate those who have been found. (Lost sheep gospel)

**Questions to ponder:**

* **As CWL members what do we celebrate the most?** We must reflect on the heart of the CWL.
* **How can CWL members embody the missionary stance?**
* **Writing resolutions…how can we reinforce our engagement stance?**
* **Are you more committed to your mission or your way of doing things?**
* **Why we exist? Vs. How we exist?**

**Lesson of the Swiss watch:**  In 1968, 80% of the watches in the world were Swiss made. When quartz technology was introduced, the Swiss were unwilling to change and kept their “spring models”. Today, you are hard pressed to find Swiss watches…they have only about 7% to 8% of the marketplace.

If our parishes and CWL councils are to survive we must change from a love of the “model” of the Church to a love of the “mission” of the church. A maintenance model would include sacraments and catechesis but little more.

Perfection is the enemy of the good…focus on the parish.

“Change is knocking on our doors…will we let them in?”

We were encouraged to build a relationship with our MLAs and MPs. The Canadian Council of Bishops have encouraged the CWL to be the voice within government. Our call to social action was reaffirmed and captured by outgoing National President Barb Dowding when she said in her closing remarks: **“*From prayer to parliament – our voices must be heard”.***

In saying this, we were disappointed to be advised by a disposition letter received just prior to the convention that the two resolutions brought forward by OLPH in Sherwood Park pertaining to Support for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Victims and Holy Rosary in Grande Cache pertaining to Reducing the Impact of Disposable Hygiene Products would not be brought to the floor at the National Convention.

Our proposed Amendment to the National Constitution & By-Laws will be brought forward for consideration at the October meeting of the new national executive.

**Five Resolutions were passed:**

2016.01 Equal Access to Permanent Resident Status, an Amendment to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act

2016.02 Eating Well With Canada’s Food Guide

2016.03 Warning Labels on Food and Drug Products for all Inactive Substances and Additives

2016.04 Amend the Canada Health Act to Identify Palliative Care as an Insured Health Service.

2016.05 Amend the Canada Health Act to Include Home Care as an Insured Health Service.

The two resolutions that Alberta Mackenzie had sent to national did not come to the floor. Eleven resolutions were sent to the national convention but only five made it to the floor.

The final speaker was Dr. Nuala Kenny who is an ordained Sister living in Nova Scotia who spoke to us on medically assisted death. She spoke for 45 minutes and I would have gladly listened to her for another 45 minutes.

Sister, Dr. Nuala Kenny spoke to us about the fundamental elements of a “good” death:

1. Trust in the Lord.
2. Ready to go.
3. Said their good byes.
4. Surrounded by loved ones. Non-abandonment. We do not want to be alone

Leading to this we need:

* Continuity of care
* Avoidance of unwanted technological intervention
* Respectful communication
* Completion of life’s las things: “I am sorry” “Thank you”

**Goals to be set:**

1. To gain an understanding of the Supreme Court of Canada decision & Bill C14
2. Recognize the importance of hospice and palliative care
3. Assess the reasons a person requests a medically assisted death.
4. Accept the challenges this presents for the Christian community and the response needed.
5. Understand the moral distinction between the notion of individual rights vs common good will.
6. Represents a social slippery slope which has occurred with the abortion issue. Abortion is now commonly practiced as birth control.

**Conditions:**

1. Individual must be mentally competent
2. Physician(s) must receive a voluntary request and consent
3. Must have a serious condition or illness
4. Advanced state of irreversible decline in capability
5. Enduring and intolerable suffering.
6. Reasonably foreseeable natural death
7. Advance directives

**Choice** is compromised by a Physician’s rights over a patient’s rights.

**Conscience**—How do you form it in relation to church teachings?

Palliative Care does not hasten or prolong death. Euthanasia on the other hand is a response to psychological distress and usually not to physical ones. Psychological distress includes issues of human suffering, guilt, am I burden to others? And a sense of hopelessness.

***“Chest Pain vs Heart Ache”*** The new evangelization calls us to have the courage to swim against the tide.

This was an election year and our very own Fran Lucas from Edmonton was elected as 1st Vice President.

**The 2016-18 National Executive of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada will be**

President - Margaret Ann Jacobs

Ann Marie Gorman - President-Elect and Organization

Fran Lucas - 1st Vice-President and Education & Health

Shari Guinta - 2nd Vice-President and Communications

Janet McLean - Secretary-Treasurer

Joan Bona - Resolutions

Betty Colaneri - Community Life

Doreen Gowans - Christian Family Life

Jacqueline Nogier - Spiritual Development

Nancy Simms - Legislation

National Life Member Liaison - Bev Weiler (London, Ontario)

Along with other new Life Members, Edmonton Diocesan’s newest Life Member, June Fuller was initiated at the convention at a memorable ceremony presided over by Bishop McGrattan & Barb Dowding. Please be advised that the Life Membership process has changed and so please review the National Manual of Policy and Procedures for the new timelines.

The new theme starting in January, 2017 as selected by Margaret Ann Jacobs will be ***"Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God's Call".*** We look forward to receiving a description of the theme elements and meaning which should soon become available to us.  On your behalf, I have written a letter to new National President Margaret Ann Jacobs inviting her to attend our 2017 Edmonton Diocesan Convention to be held at Corpus Christi Church in Edmonton from April 21st thru April 23rd, 2017. It is hoped that if she attends she can personally provide us with more information on the theme she has chosen

Additional Information:

* Completed spiritual pledge cards as found on the national website will be forwarded to Pope Francis. Pledge cards must be received at national by October 31st. Ontario have already submitted theirs. Some things that can be pledged:
* Training in Palliative Care.
* Baking donations to hospices
* Musical interludes for patients
* Read to patients to provide comfort
* Donations of prayers
* Donations of money
* Commitment to contact a hospice to volunteer
* A Parish Council mailing will be sent out from National in October with the new Annual Reporting instructions and forms. It is a transitional year with National expecting both written and on-line reports. We are encouraged to share this information at our Fall Meetings.

During the convention I participated in the Halifax Harbor Cruise, the Grand Pré Tour, the Opening and Closing Masses, the Shore Club Lobster Dinner, the Holy Door Pilgrimage to St. Mary’s Basilica and the Closing Banquet.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to represent you at this important annual gathering.

This concludes my report,

Mary Hunt, President

Edmonton Diocesan Council

The Catholic Women’s League of Canada



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