

It is indeed my pleasure to provide a report of the CWL National Convention. We began our trip on Sunday, 10 Aug at 8:00 am and with passengers Zita Cameron and Myrna Murray we motored to Fredericton, NB. Once registered at the Convention Centre, we sat in on the Resolutions Dialogue for all members. There were 5 Resolutions to consider and the session was to give an overview of the process of resolutions and an opportunity to discuss one of the resolutions at our table.

The Official Opening and Eucharistic Celebration was held at 5:00 pm at St. Dunstan's Roman Catholic Church in Fredericton. The mass was celebrated by Bishop Richard Harris of the Diocese of Saint John. From the opening hymn and processional of the many clergy in attendance to the flag ceremony with the provincial presidents to the closing hymn, the service was very uplifting. Following the Eucharistic Celebration, we went next door for a reception where we had good food and fellowship.

Monday, 11 August

Our morning began with the celebration of the Eucharist with celebrant Bishop Gerard Bergie. During the celebration, there was a Memorial Service for Deceased Members and Spiritual Advisors. The leader for this was Barbara Dowding and the Provincial Presidents placed a red rose for deceased members from their province and the white rose for Spiritual Advisors was placed by National President.

The Keynote address was delivered by Bishop Robert Morneau on the topic "To Live with the Spirit". Bishop Morneau began his address by saying that Mary had two roles: to listen and to love. We are all called to **five factors in Discipleship** – it grows in baptism – Christ is always with us.

- 1) Maturity – we grow up spiritually
- 2) Holiness – universal call to holiness
- 3) Community – in a culture of narcissism, we are called to social justice
- 4) Service – FOR is a big word, especially for women – Body and Blood of Christ

5) Generosity – gratitude and gifted on the journey with and for him

### **Consequences of Stewardship**

1) Receive God's gifts gratefully i.e. gift of nature – Question – What is your gift?

2) Nurture these gifts responsibly – we are disciples

3) Share what God has given us – sacrificially and justly

4) Return to the Lord what he has given us – Abundantly

### **He then touched on Discipleship:**

1) Be true to yourself

2) Make each day your masterpiece – opportunities given to us

3) Help others – service in your church, community, family

4) Drink deeply from good books – nourish our minds

5) Make friendships a fine art – if you have one friend – lucky and if 2 - WOW

The 5 T's of friendship – Time, Talk, Thankfulness, Tenderness, and Trust

6) Pray for guidance – life is tough with war, abortion

7) Give thanks for your gifts – being a Eucharist person

*Following lunch, the afternoon session began with Opening Prayer – On Being a Well*

The Keynote Address was given by Honorable Michael Kirby

1<sup>st</sup> chair of Partners for Mental Health, Canadian Mental Health Association, and recipient of a Parliamentary Award. His presentation would cover several points:

- Describe how a Senate Committee got involved with Mental Health Issues
- Describe the magnitude of the problem for youth
- Provide services to youth – How CWL can help with change.

He said that 75% of kids who need help don't get it. It starts in youth. If we focus on the needs of young people early, we would save money i.e. less jail time, welfare, etc. Biggest reason mental illness is not talked about – stigma. Very few people want to stand up and be counted. Then we moved to community based housing but with the closing beds, they went to the streets.

Government works in silos – Mental illness crosses departments – one thing which is horizontal that is done poorly. It is never the main part of any one department. Why do we think now is the time - there is a steady increase in the number of cases. There is need of an Awareness Program – make governments and public ready for making progress. But it can't be done overnight.

40% of Canadians would not seek help for mental illness. 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the problem is with Medicare – doesn't cover the drugs or have not engaged other health care professionals. The wait times to get services are long i.e. to get a child psychiatrist it might be 12 – 18 months in order to provide counselling.

This type of waiting doesn't often happen in families who have money – money = service so the system is inherently unfair – we need to get provincial governments to deal with this. It would be good if they could go from 25 to 50% of children covered – at least 8 sessions for patient counselling. At the average rate of \$125 x 8 sessions equals \$1,000 – not a large investment.

How can the CWL help?

Go on the website [www.rightbyyou.ca](http://www.rightbyyou.ca) for information about the Child and Youth campaign

- Sign petitions
- Write letters to MPs
- Write letters to MLAs

We have to begin to plead for this issue from the grass roots up if we want it to be resolved. We have social media to help to make contacts – marshalling many people quicker and cheaper. With the help of CWL, family, friends we can make a difference quickly.

Kathleen Ancker, National Director of Development and Patricia Guylea gave a short presentation on the work of the missions in Canada. She talked about Pope Francis's message that we must go out to those on the periphery. She talked about the handout that was given **Great Need – Great Hope** about the project in Northern Alberta which serves Cree, Deny, and Metis. CMC allocated roughly \$4 million annual to keep our missions open and the light of His love alive:

- Support of missionaries \$1,717,665
- Building and repair of churches \$1,048,654
- Religious education programs \$ 446,895
- Lay pastoral leadership programs \$ 474,786
- Education of seminarians \$ 345,000

She also talked about some first nations reserves with up to 99% unemployment and often the population on reserves is 50% youth. There is a lack of roles and social needs are not met. She had a short video to show about the missions in Canada – some copies were made available for use in our Councils.

The day closed with Monday afternoon Closing Prayer.

## **Tuesday, 11 August**

Our day was underway with Eucharist celebration with celebrant Archbishop Valery Vienneau.

The business sessions began with Call to Order and Opening remarks by National President Betty Anne Brown Davidson and National Spiritual Advisor Bishop William McGrattan who remarked about us having the docility of spirit like Mary.

It was noted that the reports from the National Chairs would be in the next League Magazine. Introductions were also made of representatives from the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League who spoke about their organization and that we pursue the same goals – evangelization. They rotate their national executive every 3 years at their congress and their dress code is a dark suit with black stockings. She closed with Go forward and do His work.

Next was Linda Kline – Women’s interchurch ministry WICC with various members from many churches. Dec 6<sup>th</sup> will be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. World Day of Prayer Canada Pin – we can order them with our order for materials. Bahamas is next year’s country. Map is on their website WICC.org

Next was Rebecca Woodhall from the United States – National President of National Council of Catholic women – USC. We help one another. Sisters in the USD admire sisters in Canada and pray to address the challenges to the faith.

Next was MaryBeth Stewart from the Nova Scotia region of WUCO. From Pope Francis – Joy of the gospel fills the heart with a sense of joy and hope that the world calls for.

Notice calling the meeting was read by Judy Lewis and the roll call taken. Credentials Report by Hazel Robichaud with 171 Accredited Delegates. Next was the adoption of standing rules; approval of agenda; approval of previous minutes; convention committee; correspondence; report of pre-convention meeting.

Following the break, Imelda Perley gave presentation Building Relationships with Aboriginal Women. She talked about her people naming the river Woolastock – it was later named by the settlers as the Saint John River. She brought sweet grass with her as mother earth. The smoke is first – top of the head – teaches how to think in a strong way; to ears – to listen to both sides of the story – listen more than you speak; eyes water (tears) is a sacred gift and smoke represents the 4 medicines – sage, sweet grass, tobacco, and cedar. Next is the mouth – teach how to use words that do not hurt but words that heal; nose – to smell good, smell the earth; heart; feet – they use all parts of their animals i.e. to make moccasins so they try to walk gently on Mother Earth; hands – no difference except go to the left first because that is where the heart is.

She talked about the sweat lodge – they call it their church – they humble themselves in that they crawled to go in – they crawled before they could walk. In choosing the alders for the lodge, they are to heal the spirit. Cedar over the door cleans their soul and rids them of negativity.

She talked about sharing language – spiritual knowledge; sharing sacred songs. She closed with “My spirit is one with you Great Spirit”.

Following this the closing prayer morning session and Commissioning of new Life Members was held. (This was very moving)

The afternoon began with opening prayer and included Archbishop Oscar Romero’s prayer “Creating the Church of Tomorrow”. This was followed by Sheila Isaac, Program Manager Coady Institute on Issues facing Aboriginal Women in Canada. She gave a summary of Aboriginal history. She talked also about loss – family, land, traditional livelihood. Current issues included lost and stolen sisters; lateral violence; child welfare; **Idle no More**.

- Take this knowledge and share with Canadian Civil Society
- Non aboriginal people/educators have to deliver the Idle No More presentation to gain allies for change
- Ask MP or MLA what they are doing for the Environment and Aboriginal peoples
- Ask MLA’s to include Aboriginal History into the educational system
- Idle No More movement – goals are to engage the next generation of indigenous women leaders to provide practical skills and experiences and to benefit from the wisdom of established indigenous women leaders and rediscovering their resources.

Following the break, business sessions included reports of provincial presidents, national president and national spiritual advisor and concluded with afternoon closing prayer.

### **Wednesday, August 13**

The day began with morning opening liturgy with music and a very moving Gospel drama: Mary Magdalene at the tomb.

Reports were then given by secretary/treasurer who reviewed the financial statements; report from the executive director. Following the break, a review of the resolution process took place.

Spiritual development chairperson talked about using CWL Prays, convention booklets to change our spiritual development part of our meetings. CWL gave 39,370.62 to Catholic Missions- perhaps we could try for \$40K this year; also looking for new hymns for Lady of Good Counsel.

Organization chairperson talked about Catch the Fire and encouraged us to revive the embers and sparks.

Christian family life chairperson - CFL touches the lives of everyone and touches us in our lived faith experiences. We need to provide the tools to help to:

- Educate ourselves about Catholic Church touching every part of CFL – sanctify of life
- Inform members of what the Church also teaches – be careful to provide a balanced approach
- Empathize with people in crisis – CFL facing critical impacts of family life
- Called to live the Gospel values – faith, love, hope

Community life chairperson talked about great concerns including poverty – we need to do our part both home and abroad. With the 2015 election, write to MP's. Promotion of Marty's Dream – reached the goal of 50K for residence in Ghana. Overview of Velma's Dream – Melodie Gabriel gave an update on Catholic Near East Welfare Association – a lot of work in Middle East and Ukraine. Support is important and timely for Shepherd's Field Hospital. Holy Land Pilgrimage June 19 – 30/15. Living Wells for Christians in Middle East (prayer cards were handed out). More info at [www.cnewa.ca/web/velmasdream](http://www.cnewa.ca/web/velmasdream). Need \$9K more to meet the goal. Before breaking for lunch, the closing Morning Prayer was conducted as well as the Ceremony to Archive League Resolutions (list to appear in the next League magazine).

Opening prayer for the afternoon session was held followed by a presentation by the 2015 convention committee to be held in Vancouver, BC.

Education & Health chairperson talked about support for MaterCare individually but not through National. She urged blood donor participation.

Communications chairperson suggested we share our stories of faith, highlight the good and the warmth of stirring hearts.

Resolutions chairperson – all resolutions that were presented at the convention were approved. Legislation chairperson gave an update on legislation enacted upon which were put forward to the federal government by CWL. International relations chairperson gave an update.

Following the break, the business sessions resumed with the Rite of Elections. Next was the voting process (which only the provincial presidents could vote) beginning with the vote for President Elect and concluded with Chairpersons. As this was a spiritual process, the Honorary Life Members led all participants in the praying of the Rosary during the process. Various people and situations were prayed for.

Closing mass was held at St. Dunstan's Roman Catholic Church at 5:00 pm. The Celebrant was Most Reverend William T. Grattan, National Spiritual Advisor. Following the homily, the Installation of Officers of the National Executive took place. After mass, we returned to the Convention Centre to enjoy the Gala Banquet.

My thanks to the Provincial CWL for allowing me the opportunity to attend this wonderful, enlightening, and spiritual experience.

H. Irene Gallant

Organization and President Elect