

I am very pleased to provide a report of the 2015 CWL National Convention. Barb MacFarlane and I were the accredited delegates from PEI and our roommates were Elaine Black and Laurie Smythe Co-Chairs of the 2017 Convention Planning Committee. Barb and I attended the Resolutions Dialogue that is held for those who wish to participate. 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 were held at 7:00 pm at St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church in Vancouver. The mass was celebrated by Most Reverend J. Michael Miller, CSB Archbishop of Vancouver with concelebrant Most Reverend William McGrattan, National Spiritual Advisor and Bishop of Peterborough. To begin the evening, First Nations Smudging with Sacred Medicines was held, and then the flag procession with the provincial presidents, followed by our National Anthem and then the Liturgical Procession with many clergy in attendance. The service was very uplifting and was followed by a reception for delegates.

Monday, 11 August

The morning began with celebration of the Eucharist with celebrant/homilist Most Rev. Stephen Jensen. Mass was followed by the keynote address given by Dr. Josephine Lombardi on the topic *One Heart, One Voice, One Mission*. **Dr. Lombardi is presently Assistant Professor of Pastoral and Systematic Theology, Professor of Field Education, and Director of Lay Formation for St. Augustine's Seminary in Scarborough, Ontario.**

For the first day, Dr. Lombardi concentrated on *One Heart*. She began by talking about life skills. How to love well – your family, those who hurt you, etc. She said about hearts – hope protects our minds and love & faith are the breast plate for our hearts. We need to love with our hearts, love ourselves, and love our neighbours. In loving we know who God is and helps us to love others. We cannot love our neighbours unless we love ourselves.

Love as – you shall know the Lord your God

- Knowing, following, and trusting God
- Know and believe that He is God
- Truth, goodness, beauty

How to see Christ in everyone. We are inspired to trust God – do God's will perfectly. Not everything that is God is God's will. Quote "**God's delays are not God's denials**". God needs to work on our hearts, relationships, and grow in love. Sometimes sadly enough the answer is no. We have to love God first. Quote "**God is in the restoration business not the destruction business**". Goodness – you are inspired by the goodness of others. Beauty – love of God's creation. When our senses are satisfied, we are satisfied. God is love – those who love, love God. John 4.7 Perfect fear casts out fear. Perfect love is unconditional – when we hurt each other we rob each other of joy & peace. Fear is the opposite of love – have we explored our fears? Examine thoughts – real and perceived. Do you fear conflict? Approach with great love.

Loving yourself with perfect love means you can love your neighbour with perfect love. Self-Knowledge – Do I know myself? What does it feel like to be in my presence? Do you feel peace or love? Thru prayer – help me to know ourselves. Some need humility to be brought back to centre and some thru healing. Humility keeps us on track.

Obstacles to self-love:

- Perfectionism - nothing wrong with high standards if we are focused. Shame holds people hostage – everyone makes mistakes. Greater than God’s love are mercy and forgiveness – greater than shame.
- Remorse – need to let go and move on.
- Emotional wounds and abuse – these are lies of the devil.
- Compassion – needs to do the possible with your gifts and talents – body image
- No boundaries – not protecting yourself. Repressed emotion is killing us. Can we say no.
- Lack of clarity – re one’s true self – have courage to ask God to reveal self

Obstacles to loving others:

- Fear of total gift of self-due to past hurts. Gift of understanding – do we know our vulnerabilities – they can dominate us
- **I don’t know better, I should know better, I do know better**
- Trauma can make us paralyzed – just as you have been celebrated, now you have been crucified

Some things come naturally to us. We may be tempted to jealousy of something others have – envy is hate. The only gift that keeps focus on others is love, the greatest gift. Only love is rewarded in the after-life. God asks us to do everything with great love. It keeps us from comparing with others. Pride or hardness of heart – we may be resentful and that could lead to a grudge. Surrender your hurts – His healing and justice will always be the perfect justice. Judgement – only when we are humbled do we not judge.

Anger – from the Bible - “be angry but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger”. Not expressing anger harms your physical and immune systems. How do we express our anger? Righteous anger – is it rooted in prayer and discernment; is it rooted in truth and objectivity; is it factual. Love disarms a person. Righteous anger is open to forgiveness and mercy. Love is not passive aggressive, it is experienced with self-control, it is not coated in fear, it is expressed with love. Sinful Anger – name calling, slander or gossip, someone with past mistakes, blocking the possibility to restore peace – debt has been paid with an apology, cursing, revenge – retaliation. How do you manage conflict? How do we express anger? Are we comfortable expressing anger? Was it resolved to your mutual satisfaction?

Closing Meditation – Perfect love is defined – St. Paul tells us what love is and what it is not. Cast out all fears. Be mindful of how fear tests our patience – are you patient? Perfect love is not envy; boastful; arrogant; rude; resentful; do we have self-control; do not rejoice in wrong doing – love rejoices in truth; **humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.** Receive corrections with grace; love believes all things, love hopes all things, love endures all things, love never ends.

To close the morning session, there was *Reflection on the Visitation* which was followed by a Blessing and the Angelus by Bishop McGrattan.

To open the afternoon session, a Memorial Service for Deceased Members and Spiritual Advisors was held. The leader for this was Margaret Ann Jacobs 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 Barbara Dowding.

Following the service, the business sessions opened.

- Credentials Report– Voting Delegates National 11; voting delegates provincial 11; provincial accredited delegates 20; diocesan delegated 58; honorary life members 10; life members 54 = 164

This was followed by closing afternoon session with On Peace & Sharing “the Good things God has Given Us”.

Tuesday morning - began with Liturgy of the Hours led by Betty Ann Brown Davidson. Following this, the Keynote address continued on *One Voice*.

The voice of Jesus:

- My sheep listen to my voice and they follow me
- What you say flows from what is in your head
- And I tell you this – you must give an account on judgement day for every little word you speak
- **Hurt people hurt people**

Voice – our words reveal our hearts. Voices of Mary & Elizabeth:

- Elizabeth’s battle with public disgrace
- The silence endured by Zechariah
- Both were afraid re encounter with Christ and the Good News
- Mary is told not to be afraid
- Mary goes with ‘haste’ to be with Elizabeth
- Joseph is confused.

We are all called to give birth to Christ in our lives.

How do you relate:

- Zachariah loses his voice
- Joseph is hurt and confused yet he stands with someone he loves
- Mary rejoices yet she is misunderstood and judged

What do you fear? Some fears can only be conquered with the help of the Holy Spirit. Do you have an Elizabeth in your life? What do we fear? Some can only be cured with the Holy Spirit. How many of us forget to ask for help from Christ.

Feminine Genius

St. John Paul II

- The female brain is wired to read character – wired to read vulnerability
- Gifted communicators and teachers
- Study in 2012 re strengths of females in building relationships, helping others and collaboration
- Kevin O’Leary has raised more money investing in female entrepreneurs than in males. We set goals that are achievable, we take less risk, we deliver on our promises making us more reliable.
- How we respond to crisis – women with gut feeling, men more by the book.

Using our Voices

Prophet – speak for God to the people, make god’s will attractive, and bring clarity and reason. Some have a private mission, others have a public mission. Day to day conversations – characters in the Book of Proverbs: simple person, the fool, the hypocrite, and the wise person. Wise person tells the truth, is not abusive, does not gossip. The speech of the wise person is restrained and life giving. The wise do not argue with the wicked. Lay preaching (Proclamation) inspires an encounter with Christ at retreats, conferences, prayer services.

Women need to be fed by women. Using the word focuses us to listen. We need to use our voice for teaching and preaching. Using one Voice and Actions to Inspire an Encounter

- From distrust to trust
- From complacency to curiosity
- From closed to shame to open to change
- Seeking God’s will
- Conversion

Do we practice what we preach?

- Self-knowledge
- Discipline in thoughts and words
- Time alone to reflect – Jesus – 40 days; St. Paul – 3 years
- Transformed individuals inspired others to experience the same
- People are watching us. Be the heart and voice of Jesus

Following the keynote address, the business sessions began with the Credentials report and a review of the resolutions process.

Reports

Spiritual Development: new hymn Our Lady of Good Counsel has been selected

Working on a new funeral protocol

Missions in Canada – from July/14 to June/15 \$35,197.65

Organization: Affirm, Empower, Commission

Members value friendships and the support of others

Claire Herron – CWL Leadership Foundation: she spoke of a strategic study re how much needs to be raised, what foundations, etc. that could help as well as the support of CWL members.

The question was asked if this was only for CWL members and the answer was no. Following the break, the Eucharistic celebration and the commissioning of life members to close the morning session was held. Celebrant/homilist was Most Rev. Richard Gagnon.

Reconvening prayer - Unity of Mission This was followed with guest speaker Bishop Gary Gordon – *The Abundant Heart and our Mission's Call*. He began by rolling up his sleeves and compares this to CWL who always demonstrate that they roll up their sleeves when things are to be done. He says the CWL have a good heart and a strong mind for the Mission of the church in Canada and in other countries. He said we stretch out our arms to touch the world. CWL members are making a difference in their communities, not only in their church but in other organizations. We are a community of trusted sisters – a great source of strength and optimizing a strong mind and a good heart. Mission is to end isolation our own communities – we are tender hearted. He related a number of stories about his work in the missions in the north and also stories about his mother who was a CWL member for many years. He was very amusing and yet had a good solid message.

He was followed by Kathleen Anker, Catholic Mission in Canada and she indicated that over the past 14 years, CWL members have donated over \$345K. Last year's donation was \$37, 197.65.

Business sessions resumed

Christian Family Life – A motion was passed to reinstate the resolution Abortion Pill RU 486 and to write to the Prime Minister, Minister of Health and the medial to halt the distribution of the pill.

Community Life – Donations for Voluntary Funds was \$64,164.95 – this was down by over \$4,000 from the previous year. Velma's Dream - \$24,028.37.

Spiritual Life – working on protocol and guidelines for CWL members for funerals, articles on the new Evangelization – this fall there will be a new encyclical from Pope Francis - Jubilee Year of Mercy, corporal and spiritual acts of Mercy. Spiritual bouquet – membership drives are part of evangelization. Continue to run the race – social issues, taking the lead where you should, initiatives for the Foundation – spend the endowment on education.

Education & Health – Partners for Life contribution \$28,971.75. There were 4 students receiving bursaries for the Coady Institute and 20 students receiving CWL Bursaries.

Canadian Catholic Organization for Development & Peace – a short video was presented. It was mentioned that by donating 1% of the cost of luxury items can make a difference – this 1% donation raised goes to National.

To close the afternoon session – Prayer for an Increase in Vocations to the Ordained Ministry and the Consecrated Life.

To open the morning session was Morning Prayer This was followed by the Keynote Address continued. Dr. Lombardi focused on One Mission.

She talked about inspiring an encounter with Christ. Personal transformation to one heart and one voice. There is a need for communal transformation. Some will crawl, some will walk, some will run and someone will carry us. My Father taught me not to quit.

Seven sectors in need of an encounter with Christ:

- Culture – Paul in Athens; culture forming conscience; destructive idols – where there are idols in culture there is no God. Too much of self-loathing. Only God can satisfy us. Four intellectual changes: mood thought, behavior, physiology. Encouraging Christ in Culture. From the Holy Bible there is truth; goodness by helping someone and beauty of the earth. How are we feeding the T's, G's, and B's?
- Social sector – family dynamics and needs - marriage preparation; migrants – just policies. We are all called to the same state of life. Encourage healthy dating. How are we preparing people for marriage? Blended families pose unique challenges. Born in loss, death & divorce, fantasy, confusion, crazy time, and then stability. How are we helping them to heal? Migrants in detention centres – how are we helping them
- Influences/Understanding families – pre-natal care, post-natal care, culture, family of origin, losses and gains, genetics and grace as the greatest influence.
- Economy – just sharing of the world's resources (20% of the population consumes 86% of the resources. We need to consider future needs. They will be done – give us our daily bread – material and spiritual needs. .
- Civil Life – peace, liberation, regulation and interaction of National governments, dialogue between cultures and religions, defence of human rights and peoples, integrity of creation environment.
- Media and Social communications – Vatican II on Social Commune, poster campaign “Before & After”, , Catholics “come home” campaign, radio/television – Salt & Light TV.
- Religion – educational emergency – Pope Benedict XVII, witness and proclamation, self-knowledge and conversion, internal curriculum. Retain 90% of what we worked on. Encourage people to be problem solvers. Life skills – jobs are important as external curriculum.

John 17 – Prayer of Jesus – **unity does not mean uniformity.**

Business sessions continued :

Education and Health – Motions carried included 2015-01 Increased Early Intervention and Access to Children and Youth Mental Health Services; 2015-02 Ban Plastic Microbeads in Personal Care Products; 2015-03 Banning the Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides.

Legislation – Motions carried included 2015-04 Invoke Section 3e of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the case of Carter vs Canada; 2015-05 Reinstatement of the Mandatory Long-Form Census. Laws at all levels of government must respect the rights of all people.

Prayer to Our Lady of Good Counsel and The Angelus were led by Bishop McGrattan to close the morning session.

All Creation Celebrates the Wonders of God opened the afternoon session.

Speaker Pavel Reid spoke on The Synod on the Family and the New Evangelization. He indicated that the Church is in trouble and why the Pope called for the Synod. What's new about the Gospel? New is spreading the gospel where there used to be the church. People who were once Catholic are not far away – they are in our own families. Not absent or distant. We need to focus our attention to lead families back to church and perhaps a deep encounter of Christ. Some of the findings of the first synod included: 1) most Catholics don't know what the Church teaches on family and married life, 2) church documents – language is difficult to understand, 3) most people do not think of their marriage or family as a church. Few see a relationship between family and the church, 4) not a place to turn to for support. They think they will be judged, not supported. In plain language, most people are surprised of the church proposals. We are desperate for plain, down to earth information on marriage and family. 20 – 40% adult Catholics are separated or divorced. Young people not marrying or starting families. People are abandoning vocations of marriage. Urgent matter – must deal with so set the process in motion.

Secularism – reversed by return to family life. Getting married and having children – community of moral and good people to raise good and moral children; open to the mysteries of life; image of trinity is how we image God. For those in marriage and family life preparation of Christian life, they will pass along their faith and future is secured. Christian family is the only reliable source of Christian faith. Serious on evangelization – serious on marriage and family life. Each culture has their own problems with marriage and family. In west & Canada divorce and remarry or cohabit or same sex – not simple issues. Significant Catholic divorces – difficulties arise on people who want to remarry – seek an annulment. Something is missing in the full directions on marriage. First – know they belong so we can believe and how to behave as a Christian

What can we do? How can we affect the Synod and outcomes? Pray for the Holy Spirit – open to signs; what is being done for families and understands living. **Let's shake things up.** Find ways to make our own Church – CWL open to understanding families, church community. Willing to pronounce the Gospel, be welcoming. Right to demand God's help in the vocation and mission you have been given whether in our own parishes, families, homes. This is about our own families and friends.

Following this there was a DVD presentation on the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd . This was followed by remarks by laws chairperson and report of international relations. Velma Harris spoke – she is the 1st Vice President North America on WOWCO.

Registration report -882 people registered for the convention.

Theme Prayer for One Heart, One Voice, One Mission was said to close the afternoon session.

Closing Eucharistic celebration and reaffirmation of officers was held at the Holy Rosary Cathedral with Celebrant Most Reverend J. Michael Miller, C.S.B., Archbishop of Vancouver and Concelebrant/Homilist Most Reverend William McGrattan, National Spiritual Advisor, Bishop of Peterborough.

Thank you so much for the privilege to attend this National Convention.

Respectfully submitted

H. Irene Gallant, Organization/President-Elect