

**The Catholic Women's League of Canada 98th Annual Convention
Winnipeg Manitoba, August 12-15, 2018
Theme: Inspired by the Spirit Women Respond to God's Call**

Six hundred and thirty-eight members and guests from across Canada attended the CWL National Convention. This was one of the many events marking the 200th anniversary of the Catholic Church in Western and Northern Canada.

Sunday, Day One

After registering for the convention and before the opening Mass, the delegates had an opportunity at the resolutions dialogue to review and make necessary suggestions/changes to the four resolutions to be presented during the convention.

The opening Mass took us to the St Boniface Cathedral-Basilica, Mother Church of Western Canada and historical site of the Manitoba Church established in 1818 in the Archdiocese of St Boniface. Its impressive history, cemetery, iconic facade and architectural beauty made it an interesting and beautiful place to visit. Before entering the new Cathedral for Mass, we were invited to observe and participate in a traditional Smudging ceremony on Treaty One Land in the ruins of the old St Boniface Cathedral.

The official opening and celebration of the Eucharist is always impressive with the Provincial Presidents marching in carrying their provincial flag with the National Executive following behind with all of the priests, bishops, and archbishops in attendance. As we stood and watched the flags process in, we were called to reflect on: our Canadian citizenship, our sisterhood in the Catholic Women's League of Canada, our connectedness across Canada through parish, diocesan and provincial councils, and our willingness to serve God and Canada and our joy in sharing the Eucharistic Celebration. His Grace, most Rev. Albert LeGatt DD, Archbishop of St Boniface was the main presider.

During his homily Archbishop Le Gatt shared the 200 yr. history of Catholicism in Western Canada. (This **ceremony and Mass can be viewed on the St Boniface Facebook Page.**) During the Opening Ceremony we were reminded that we were on Treaty One Territory. Representatives from the Catholic and Ukrainian Church, Government, First Nations and Metis welcomed us. We were told that the origin of the province's name, Manitoba, means "Where God Sits" and that Winnipeg is also called Winterpeg as it is the coldest city in Canada. The CWL was praised for all the resolutions presented to government and in particular palliative care and conscience rights. We were encouraged to write letters and to continue our excellent work. Representatives from the Ukrainian Church compared the CWL convention to the coming together of the apostles in the Upper Room and allowing the Holy Spirit to descend on this convention. The 98th Convention was declared open and the reception following was enjoyed by all.

Monday, Day 2

We began the day with mass at the beautiful St. Mary's Cathedral. "**The Lord gives Hope**" was the title for the Monday afternoon opening prayer and this message permeated throughout the convention.

Following the Eucharistic celebration the convention was called to order, opening remarks and greetings were brought by Bishop McGrattan outgoing Spiritual CWL Advisor who also welcomed the incoming Spiritual Advisor for the next five years, Bishop Stephen Jenson. Greetings were received from the women representing the Presbyterian, United, Ukrainian churches, the WICC and WWC.

The business sessions opened with the annual reports from the Provincial Presidents and the National President. (**These reports will be found in our fall Magazine.**) The afternoon business session continued with reports from the National board and chairpersons. All these reports inspired a sense of humility and awe as we listened to the amount of work and service that CWL members are doing across Canada. As Rolande Chernichan , Manitoba Provincial council President stated: “ **Parish Councils are the heartbeat of the League**”. We heard of many different projects that are being accomplished across Canada. The afternoon closed with a commissioning ceremony for new Life members of the CWL.

At the Monday evening banquet, we continued to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Church in Western Canada. Musicians Patti Kusturok and Jeremy Rusa joined Jamie Oliveiro, renowned storyteller to recreate the story and music behind the history of the early colony.

Tuesday, Day 3

Tuesday morning began with another spirit filled celebration at St Mary’s Cathedral. Following mass the members attended their chosen breakout sessions. The topics were: **Mental Health, Pornography, Homelessness, Indigenous Issues, Human Trafficking, and the Environment.**

Following lunch we reconvened for prayer and then our Keynote Speaker the Most Rev. Murray Chatlain, Archbishop of Keewatin was introduced. His talk was entitled “The **Almighty has done Great Things for us**”. He began his talk by referring to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and asked us, “What might this process look like for us?” He also referenced Jean Vanier’s book “Becoming Human” which explains that the first step of reconciliation is: **freedom** - and to be in dialogue we need to eliminate fear. We are all part of a common humanity. How can we accompany one another? How can we become fully human together?.

After our coffee break, Archbishop Chatlain continued his talk with reference to Ignatian Spirituality and Ignition ways of listening to God. He gave us a **few questions to ponder:**

1. When do you do your best listening to God?
2. What things or people help you to listen to what God is saying to you?
3. What is one practical thing you could try to help you listen slowly?

The afternoon session closed with a memorial service for our deceased members.

In the evening, the members and guests attended their individual provincial suppers. PEI, composed of four members, decided to go to a Japanese restaurant called Ichiban where we were dined and entertained at the same time- the food was also very delicious!

Wednesday, Day 4

Our Wednesday program opened with Morning Prayer. We were then introduced to the new Strategic Planning Video on “**Building on Foundation, The League of the Future 2018-2022.**” We continued our business sessions with reports from the Resolution and Legislation Chairpersons. The Resolution chairperson referred to the CWL as: “**You are the voice of the Living God**”. Four resolutions were debated and three were passed with the 4th one to be reviewed.

The resolutions passed were:

1. Attestation Requirement on Canada Summer Jobs Program
2. Setting a Standard for Products Marketed as Flushable
3. Legislate Designation of Hospice / Palliative Care Free from Medical Assistance in Dying

The morning closed with a Resolutions Archiving Service for those resolutions that have finished their purpose.

The afternoon continued with unfinished business reports. A farewell and Thank You Blessing were given to Bishop McGrattan for all his guidance and service to the CWL as National Spiritual Advisor for the past five years. He said that the Canadian Bishops were grateful for all the work being done by the CWL.

Then, the new theme for 2019-2021 was announced: **Care for the Environment- God’s Creation. Care of our Common Home.**

Next, the Right of Election took place followed by the adjournment of the convention. The New National Executive was installed at the closing Eucharistic Celebration at St Mary’s Cathedral.

After a busy and productive week, we gathered to enjoy the Closing Gala Banquet for a delicious meal with former and newly made friends, delegates, guests and dignitaries.

As I reflect on this convention and all that we experienced, I have been inspired to continue learning about the First Nations Peoples and their cultures. I feel that I now have a better understanding of what Canada is trying to accomplish in this time of **Truth and Reconciliation.**

Gay Garvey
President Elect
PEI Provincial Council