

Ontario President's Oral Report 2017

As I sat at my computer pondering over what I should highlight as my report at this convention, I took a long time to get my thoughts together. Over these last days you have heard the great things that are happening across our province. The Ontario provincial executive team shared their good news stories so no doubt we are all going home with a plethora of new ideas. I thought perhaps I would share a few Ah – ha moments during my term.

By far the most memorable was the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy Projects embraced by members in every council. Together they completed several corporal works of mercy by continuing their service to others supporting local food banks, breakfast programs at schools, winter coat drives, working in soup kitchens, working in palliative and hospice care centres, ministering to those in prisons and honouring deceased members. The spiritual works of mercy, while more of a challenge for our members to bring to life, caused them to strive to seek to learn and to better understand...a true opportunity for spiritual growth.

Members took to heart the need to support refugee families. Councils provided financial support, hosted clothing and household drives to outfit families and their homes and made themselves available to help in as many ways as were needed. Nearly one hundred years ago the Catholic Women's League of Canada came into being because of the need for women to support immigrant families...we have come full circle.

In light of the changing times within Canadian society, where physician assisted dying is now legal, members rallied in support of, ethical, excellent palliative and hospice care. Forums, symposiums, workshops, speaking series and web-casts were used to keep members up to date. More recently the Ontario government introduced Bill 84, *Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) Statute Law Amendment Act* that, at present, does not provide conscience protection for doctors and health care providers who conscientiously object to taking part in *MAiD*. A vigorous writing campaign was started to make our members of provincial parliament aware of our deep concern for the province's lack of conscience protection. I continue to be in awe of the on going, we stop at nothing endeavour to make the provincial government know we are not happy!

"May the 4th be with you" took on a whole new meaning for League members. National council's *12 hours of Prayer for Palliative and Hospice Care* is ever growing. Last year many gathered in small groups to prayer for ethical palliative and hospice care in Canada. This year it evolved into something bigger and better. Councils invited the community to join them in prayer, held information sessions, signed petitions and then gathered for refreshments and fellowship

The Bishop Bernard A. Pappin Memorial Bursary has been re-born! Visits were made to St. Augustine and St. Peter Seminary, where members met with and made presentations to the seminarians. This resulted in sixteen applications for the bursaries, which are given annually to ten recipients upon their return to seminary in the fall. The selection process was difficult because we would like to be able to financially support each and every applicant.

At the National convention last August Father Mallon set the stage for what has been the beginning of a conversation for change in Ontario. He asked those present three questions and gave three observations and I quote:

"Question 1: As CWL what do you celebrate most?
Question 2: As CWL how can you reinforce your stance of engagement to the world?
Question 3. As you seek to fulfill your mission outlined in your mission statement are you more committed to mission or methodology?
That is, how do you do things; what are your structures; how are these applied to evangelization? Do we cling to how we do things rather than why we do things?"

Observation 1. To survive parishes must undergo fundamental transformation from maintenance to mission.
Observation 2. Parish based CWL councils will have to show flexibility.
Observation 3. CWL members will tip the balance in determining whether parishes will be in maintenance/decline or mission/growth mode."

We have received our marching papers to go out and change, engage, seek the lost sheep and then throw the best party ever, to embrace change. We, the CWL are a mission on this earth. Are you ready to bring the conversation to life? I can hardly wait to roll up my sleeves and be part of the change...