

Community Life Oral Report Ontario Provincial Convention July 9-12

Fortitude-Courage-This gift of the Holy Spirit helps us to love God and others and to do what God wants us to do, even when we are afraid. Courage is the strength to do what isn't always easy, to stand up for the unpopular, to speak the truth, to put one's self on the line for what is right. This is such a fitting gift of the Holy Spirit for the Community Life Standing Chair. For under this standing chair, we speak for the marginalized and those who cannot speak for themselves. We must have courage to learn about the issues that face the needy, the homeless, the people that have become entrapped in human trafficking, people displaced by war, famine and natural disasters and people that have experienced injustice and hardship especially the Indigenous people of Canada. When we receive the gift of courage, we reach out and learn about these issues and educate ourselves and our fellow sisters in the League.

In every council in Ontario, sisters in the League are assisting the needy and the homeless in a variety of different ways such as food banks, meals, clothing drives, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Out of the Cold programs and drop in centres.

Members and councils have reached out to Syrian refugees. Through sponsorship and many other ways members have helped refugees start a new life here in Canada. Each refugee has lived through extremely difficult times before coming to Canada. Through programs that have educated us, we learned that when we help these new Canadians adjust to life in Canada, we all benefit.

Learning about human trafficking in Canada and how many Canadians are being trafficked was a part of our society that I did not realize was so widespread. Educating our members about this issue and the direct correlation to pornography is key to reducing the number of women, men and especially our youth that are being exploited.

During this past year in my term, my primary focus has been on issues relating to the Indigenous people. Having participated in a Blanket Exercise, attended potlucks at the Native Friendship Centre and read many articles and books including the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made me realize that each of us has a part in making true reconciliation happen. I could fill my allotted four minutes with recommendations of what each of us can do but I will ask each of you to educate yourselves on the Indigenous people. Learn what they have experienced throughout our country's history, learn about the treaties and learn about their culture-engage in dialogue—listen with respect. Courage enables us to begin the conversation. Keep pressure on our elected representatives to follow through on improving conditions on reserves—help the youth and the many issues that affect them--especially the number of suicides. You need to be courageous when you see injustice, you must stir the waters.

This term as Community Life Chair has changed me. Educating myself about these issues, especially about the Indigenous people, has touched my heart. It was difficult to read what our government and others have done in the past and what conditions are like on some of the reserves. To read about the hopelessness of the youth is truly something that haunts me. With the help of the Holy Spirit and especially, the gift of courage, I am determined to help bring positive change--to continue to discuss, to read and to speak. I pray you will all join me.

