



**Ontario Provincial Council  
The Catholic Women's League of Canada  
"Inspired by the Spirit,  
Women Respond to God's Call"**

Directive # 4

Date: January 11, 2018

**To:** Diocesan Community Life Standing Committee Chairpersons

**Cc:** Diocesan Presidents, Provincial Officers, National Community Chairperson, Sub-Committee Chairpersons, Archbishop B. M. O'Brien

**From:** Joanna Sisk, Ontario Provincial Community Life Standing Committee Chairperson

I asked Rosanne Sogan, a member of my subcommittee, to contribute to this communique by sharing her experience of homelessness. Please send me your stories too.

### **Homelessness**

Rosanne Sogan,  
Subcommittee Chair of Community Life

As I sit snuggled up on my cozy sofa with an afghan thrown over me I checked the weather channel and found that it is calling for -24 C overnight with a wind-chill of -32 C. BRRRRR that's cold!

I quickly think back to a story Bishop Gary Gordon told when speaking at the national convention in Vancouver, about searching for a homeless friend in the dark and sometimes seedy streets and alleys of Vancouver. Bishop Gordon made you see through his eyes what he saw.

And then, I recalled an action that I did two days later. My sister and I were leaving to visit friends in Victoria and there was food and drinks left in our room. Instead of throwing them out we packed them up into two bags and brought them with us when we went out for dinner. Outside our hotel was a kindly older gentleman who sat day-in and day-out on the curb side. He read or did crossword puzzles and occasionally popped up and opened the door for people to go into Tim Hortons or McDonald's. He was always pleasant. I walked over to him and offered him a bag containing, yogurt, fruit, snacks and water. I said to him it wasn't much but I thought he might enjoy it. He took it with a broad smile and a twinkle in his eye and said, "God bless you." I was humbled and now I was looking into the face of God.

We went a little further down the street and I saw yet another man who was walking and offered him the second bag. He stared at me, took the bag and walked away, not saying a word. He deposited the bag on the ground beside a corner garbage pail and

quickly began to look through the bin. We were shocked and saddened at the same time. When we caught up to him he looked at us and said, "he wouldn't eat that ?#\$\*." I picked the bag up and went off to dinner.

We ate at a nice restaurant but I could not finish my meal. There was a piece of chicken left and I asked to have it wrapped up. There had to be someone who needed this food! So off we went back to our hotel. On the way we noticed on a corner sitting on the ground a woman who was desperately down in her luck. She looked to be in her 50's but actually she was only in her 20's. I approached her and said that I had some food for her. She opened up the bag and her eyes welled up with tears and the biggest toothless smile appeared on her face. She ate the chicken as if she had not had food in days ... and I truly believe that she had not and that God had led me to her.

I saw God in both of those people that I was able to help even though it was just a little.

Thinking again during these cold days and nights this winter where up to 30,000 homeless people every night look for shelter to protect themselves from the harshness of the bitter cold, the howling wind and the falling snow. 200,000 people in any given year are homeless; 150,000 Canadians a year use a homeless shelter; 50,000 Canadians hide their homelessness by staying at friends or relatives on a temporary basis.

How can they survive?

Knowing that at -28C it only takes 10 minutes for your skin to freeze. At -40F or -40C exposing your skin to the cold no longer is safe, your skin will freeze in a few short minutes. Frostbite, hypothermia, and then if your core temperature goes below 32C moderate hypothermia sets in and when your temperature reaches 28C that is when the greatest risk of death may occur.

According to Environment Canada, 80 people die every year from the extreme cold.

How can we help?

There is a lot more work which needs to be done. If you have not looked into organizations which you can help and/or donate to, there are many to choose from. Below are just a few names of organizations in Ontario!

Good Shepherd

Out of the Cold

YMCA

Salvation Army

Young Parents No Fixed Address

The Scott Mission

A Place Called Home

London Homeless Coalition

Raising the Roof

The Homeless Hub

Homeless Veterans – Royal Canadian Legion

Hostels and Homelessness Prevention

Remember the words of God and the Corporal Works of Mercy: feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked; harbour the harbourless; visit the sick; ransom the captive; and bury the dead.