

+Pembroke Diocesan Council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada

President's Oral Report for the Ontario Provincial Convention July 8-13, 2018

Our Lady, Star of the Sea, is an ancient title for the Virgin Mary. The words, "Star of the Sea," are a translation of the Latin title, "Stella Maris." Under this name, Mary is believed to intercede as a guiding star for seafarers all around the world. The idea of Mary as a guiding star for seafarers has led to devotion to Our Lady in many Catholic coastal and fishing communities. Mary, Star of the Sea, help us to see the needs of our brothers and sisters and then to act on them with love and caring making life better for all. Our Lady, Star of the Sea, is Patroness of the Netherlands.

One way to help the homeless is to provide them with fresh, clean socks to keep their feet warm and dry, ward off disease and help keep people healthy. In the first year of action on our theme Homelessness, the members in Pembroke Diocese have given very generously to the "Sock Drive" with over 700 socks being distributed across the diocese through many charitable organizations and schools. We have also studied the situation of Homelessness as one of no home, no roots, no security, no sense of belonging and no identity. We have looked at reasons for homelessness with the root cause being poverty but other issues are prevalent too: addiction, poor health: both physical and mental, violence and abuse, unemployment, no income and a shortage of housing. Homelessness can also be those living without hope or love.

From the 50 plus ways we were given to help people who are homelessness we selected some very simple ways to try to follow: understand people who are homeless, notice them, talk to them, respect and be courteous to them, respond with kindness, and donate things like clothing, food and toys to help out. We have encouraged all members to be advocates for the homeless by lobbying the government for affordable housing, less taxes, more job training and opportunities for work.

Our councils in Pembroke diocese have also continued all their past projects to help the poor which includes the homeless: food banks, breakfast clubs, Soup kitchens, yard sales of clothing and furniture, St. Vincent de Paul luncheons, donations to mental health facilities, the schizophrenia society, serving special meals for Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter, and volunteering at homes and shelters for the homeless and people in need.

Volunteering to help at shelters and special events for the poor is something the CWL members in Pembroke diocese have embraced. We donated our coin collection from Convention to The Grind Coffee House, a refuge and shelter in downtown Pembroke whose mission is: " Helping our community one cup, one smile and one bed at a time. We are more than coffee.....we are community." We have begun this mission to support, work with, volunteer and donate to the homeless over 2017-2018 and will continue advocating for the needs of our sisters and brothers in need into 2019 calling on Mary to help us every day.

In the 12th Century, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote: “ If the winds of temptation arise, If you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation look to the Star: call on Mary; If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, of ambition, of envy, of rivalry, look to the Star, call on Mary. Should anger or avarice or fleshly desire violently assail the frail vessel of your soul, look at the Star, call upon Mary.”

The needs of the homeless are vast, just like the Sea, where we ask Mary to help us meet the needs of many through kindness, sharing, education and mentoring.

Respectfully submitted, Carmel Rumleskie