

72nd Annual Ontario Provincial Convention Report

Madam President:

Distillation is the act of purifying liquids through boiling so that the steam condenses to a pure liquid and the pollutants remain in a concentrated residue.

Spiritual growth, a mandate of this committee, is a process of distillation as it is usually accomplished through prayer (boiling), the study of scripture (steam) and Catholic teachings (condensation) with the end result being a closer, deeper, more personal relationship with our loving God. And it is these three activities that are the process during which pollutants are removed.

Sounds messy, doesn't it? Well, sometimes the process can be messy. I admit there were times when the process became "hot" for me as personal misconceptions were steamed away.

For the past two years, our prayers have focused on the homeless and the issue of inadequate housing in our province. Many of us have had the residue of pre-conceived notions about homelessness steamed away, becoming more understanding about this injustice and its root causes. Apathy was distilled out, leaving behind the pure liquid of understanding, compassion and action.

Scripture demands that we move from merely recognizing injustice, to action to right that injustice. The pollutant "let others do it" was condensed out and members across the province responded generously in donating over \$15,000 dollars in gift cards. These gift cards offered the recipients the gift of dignity in that they no longer had to rely on the charity of others, but could make their own purchases. This move to action resulted in hundreds of sleeping bags, Blessing Bags, cash donations and other items being donated to various organizations.

Looking at our national theme, *Care for our Common Home*, the same process applies. The study of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* has made us ever more aware of how our actions and the products we use impact others. Wasteful habits that harm the earth, our water and/or our environment have been undergoing a process of distillation. Many members now make every effort not to buy bottled water but instead carry reusable bottles with them. We have been moved to action on this issue in many different ways: by writing letters to our elected officials asking them to safeguard the water in the aquifers in our province, by demanding safe drinking water on all reserves, and by reducing our personal waste of water and overuse of energy.

The length of time for the process of distillation varies. For some of us, it was fairly easy ... and quick. For others, it takes a little longer. What is key ... and most important is that we are all part of the process and do not stagnate, do not give up. We are not quitters! We are in the process together, and together we will accomplish the end result ... pollutants will be removed ... sometimes gently ... sometimes with discomfort, but the end result will be the pure liquid of compassion and justice for others, and a more purposeful caring for our common home.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Tremblay
Spiritual Development chairperson