

For the next two years, our Provincial President, Colleen Perry, has challenged us to build on that momentum and focus on **Loneliness**. Loneliness, by definition, is a complex and usually unpleasant emotional response to isolation. Loneliness typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connection or communication with other beings. The causes of loneliness are varied and include social, mental, emotional, and physical factors.

Dr. David William, the Chief Ontario Medical Officer, in his 2019 Annual report states that *Loneliness and Social Isolation* are now widely recognized as public health issues in Ontario. A key take away from that report, is that increasing connectedness and sense of belonging is a complex community issue. It requires organizations, groups, governments and citizens to work together to address this complex community issue.

In fact, loneliness and isolation are prevalent across Canada and some even consider it an epidemic. According to Dr. Robin Lennox a family physician and assistant professor at McMaster University, more and more community surveys are finding anywhere between 25 and 30 per cent of Canadians, across various age groups, are reporting persistent loneliness and social isolation.

The reasons for loneliness are varied and many. Interestingly, Government statistics show that 28 per cent of households are single-person, which may also lead to social isolation. The advancements in technology also play a significant role in the increase of loneliness and social isolation. The increased use of social media, which is actually usually done alone, may be inadvertently creating more isolation, even though we're trying to engage on different platforms.

Research also shows that loneliness is prevalent throughout society, including people in marriages, relationships, families, veterans, and those with successful careers. Loneliness is often defined in terms of one's connectedness to others.

Colleen Perry has asked each standing chairperson to develop a plan of how they can address this issue in their committees. To this end, I would like to initiate the following project for the Community Life Standing Committee.

The C.A.R.E. Connection Project.

C - Communicate - Reach out to someone. It starts with a simple *Hello*

A - Act - Do something! Don't just think about doing it or don't wait. Just do it!

R - Respect - Respect people's situation. Don't judge. Be aware of their boundaries.

E - Engage - You just need to take that first step to make a world of difference to someone.

The ways to address this project may look very different, depending on the needs of your council, parish and community. Some of the councils and parishes may already have something in place to address the issue of loneliness and isolation. If so, I would love to hear from you so we can all share the ideas. Please email me and let me know.

- * How does your council keep in touch with those members that can't attend meetings or attend regular Mass? How do you communicate with them?
- * Does your council have a telephone committee?
- * Does your parish have a Caring Ministry; a hospitality committee or greeters?
- * Does your parish have a youth group; a craft circle, a mom and tots group?
- * Do you have a group that visits shut-ins, nursing homes etc.?

Perhaps you may consider establishing a sub-committee under community life, to focus on this issue. Champion this for your council, parish and community and help make us a truly connected society again.

I look forward to hearing from all of you with your ideas and/or any other suggestions you may have to make the **C.A.R.E Connection Project** successful.

With Prayers and Blessings,

Mary Capobianco