

Spirit Filled CWL Team for Ontario

As we begin this weekend and share in our ideas and thoughts for the future, as your Spiritual Advisor I want to share some ideas that I have that I think can help us be a good working team for the good of the CWL and our councils. I want to speak about being a '**Spirit-filled**' team and I am taking my cues from the last chapter of Pope Francis' encyclical "The Joy of the Gospel" The last chapter is entitled: "Spirit filled Evangelizers".

I believe that the CWL and its members are **evangelizers**. We use the term so often and we seldom stop to recall what exactly it means. It means bringing the **Gospel**, its teachings and its values, to **life** in our world. We do it in our lives, in our work, in our words and in our actions. But for this to be effective, we must be filled with the **Holy Spirit**. And Pope Francis gives us some examples and clues as to how we can become this type of team for our league.

Spirit filled evangelizers are evangelizers **fearlessly** open to the **working** of the Holy Spirit. Fearlessly open... that is quite a term. To be open is one thing, to be fearlessly open means that we are open with some **conviction**. We are open to action, we are open to challenge, we are open to being lead in directions that might not be so comfortable. We are open to being a witness to a world that might not like our example and

witness. We are to be fearlessly open to the Holy Spirit. We are '**spirited**' as the Pope says.

Being spirited refers to an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activities. Spirit filled evangelization is not the same as a set of **tasks or duties** carried out in spite of our own personal thoughts or convictions. It is an evangelization full of **fervour**, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction! This is what we are called to be as members of this provincial team. Can we see ourselves in this role? Can we share in the fervour, the joy, the courage, the generosity and the love of a team who are spirited and excited about being together?

The Pope says, Spirit filled evangelizers, are people who **WORK and PRAY**. We are called to tasks that are necessary for the league, for our councils and for ourselves, but these tasks must always be accompanied by our prayer, and uniting them to our prayer - is a sign that what we are doing is also **God's work** for the Church and for the world. The early Christians felt this conviction in their hearts thousands of years ago....some say it was easier for them at that time, but that is not true. They were under many pressures and issues that touched their lives, as issues touch our lives today. Family responsibilities, work loads, persecution by governments and other groups, financial burdens and time constraints. Yet they

rallied in a spirit of **cooperation** and **unity** that helped the church to grow, despite the odds.

We are evangelizers in order to deepen our **relationship** with Jesus. Do we ever think of our work in the Catholic Women's League as a **personal journey** to know Jesus more intimately? Do we ever think that in fulfilling our tasks, doing our reports, participating in a meeting, dealing with an issue or some trouble, that we are really building a relationship with the Lord? Pope Francis notes that if we are to be true evangelizers and to work as a team, united in purpose, we must see the Lord Jesus as the **centre** of our work and activity, and our love for Him which inspires us to do what we do.

Pope Francis notes: "A true evangelizer, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus **walks** with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus **alive** with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise or his work. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on; we lack vigour and passion".

We share this **passion** not only for the Lord but also for His people. As members of the league, we work for our members, our church and our country. People are at the **heart** of our work also. We want to make this world a better, safer, more just place for all people, both in our

Church community and in our society as a whole. Jesus showed a **closeness** to everyone, no matter what their situations. He was open to **all**, and he respect all, and he loved all. As members of this provincial team, we are called to imitate Jesus in this regard in particular.

Respecting, accepting, honouring all - and we do so not as some sense of obligation, but because it truly brings us **joy!**

The Pope notes: “If we are to share our lives with others and generously give of ourselves, we also have to realize that **every person** is worthy of our giving. Not for their physical appearance, their abilities, their language, their way of thinking, or for any satisfaction that we might receive, but rather because they are **God’s handiwork**, his creation. God created that person in his image, and he or she reflects something of God’s glory to us. Every human being is the object of God’s infinite tenderness, and he himself is present in their lives.”

Jesus’s whole life was a way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily acts of generosity, and finally the total giving of himself reveals the mystery of God’s love. Sometimes we loose our **enthusiasm** to do our work, to participate in our outreach, to fulfill our duties and tasks with enthusiasm and conviction - but a **spirit filled** evangelizer knows that if we show conviction, love and generosity in our actions, with a sense of Joy - then this is what touches the **hearts** of others. This is what

they seek in finding God in their lives. We bring that to them in our example and joy.

We look to the example of Jesus and: “Moved by his example, we want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them materially and spiritually in their needs, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep; arm in arm with others, we are committed to building a new world.” Is this not **precisely** the work of the Catholic Women’s League?

Sometimes we can become **discouraged** if we do not see the results of our efforts. Pope Francis mentions this and says that a true evangelizer, even if they do not see immediate results for their work, know that a **seed** has been planted, and that the Holy Spirit will help that seed to grow in the future. “Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness, something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On barren land, life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads.”

This **encourages** us to keep to the helm of our ship and no matter what setbacks might occur, we know that in

the end the good will emerge for our work. As members of the Catholic Women's League, we must **trust** in God and in the Holy Spirit that our efforts in building the kingdom of God here on earth are never in vain: "Let us believe the Gospel when it tells us that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways: like the small seed which grows into a great tree (cf. *Mt* 13:31- 32), like the measure of leaven that makes the dough rise (cf. *Mt* 13:33) and like the good seed that grows amid the weeds (cf. *Mt* 13, 24-30) and can always pleasantly surprise us."

The Holy Father uses this wonderful example when he speaks of our work seemingly without result. He says: "Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but **mission** is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a **show** where we count how many people come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement. It may be that the Lord uses our **sacrifices** to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit." So much so, the work of the Catholic Women's league. We work for the good of others, sometimes never seeing our results - I think of the great worker of 'legislation' and all this involves, sometimes with some setbacks but always **fruitful**.

Evangelizers, are not only **workers**, but also **prayers**. Pope Francis recommends intercessory prayer. We

do this regularly as a league, we pray for one another and each other's needs and issues. This **intercessory** prayer helps strengthen us as team. Through this prayer, we not only seek help from God for our needs, and the needs of others, but we also pray with a sense of **gratitude** in our hearts - a kind of thankfulness, says the Pope. What our intercession achieves is that his power, his love and his faithfulness are shown ever more clearly in the midst of the people through our work and efforts in the league.

Finally the Pope notes **Mary** as our prime example and our model for our work as spirit filled evangelizers. "Mary was able to turn a stable into a home for Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love. She is the handmaid of the Father who sings his praises. She is the friend who is ever concerned that wine not be lacking in our lives. She is the woman whose heart was pierced by a sword and who understands all our pain. As mother of all, she is a sign of hope for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice. She is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life, opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love. As a true mother, she walks at our side, she shares our struggles and she constantly surrounds us with God's love."

As women of the Catholic Women's League, Provincial Council, we desire to be 'spirit filled evangelizers' and to work as a team, united in faith, united in conviction, united in purpose, united in passion, and

united in love and concern for one another. This unity binds us together and helps us to see ourselves as **one**. We all know that as a team - **Together Each Achieves More**. Let us make this team a true reality as we embark on this journey for the next two years... **spirit filled** and filled with **Joy!** The Joy of the League. The Joy of the Gospel! May Mary, Our Lady of Good Counsel, be our Guide

*Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.*

Help us to be **cooperators** in this great work as members of the Catholic Women's League of Canada, the Provincial Council of Ontario. We know you will be there to help us along. Amen.

- Spirit filled Evangelizers.
- Spirit filled Provincial Council members.
- A true Spirit filled Team!

A Team Story

One windy March day the Mayor of the town decided to take a stroll across the park. He ran into a small boy who was flying the biggest and most beautiful kite he had ever seen.

It soared high and gently across the sky that the mayor was sure it could be seen in the next city. This little town didn't have very many things that were spectacular, so the Mayor decided to award a "key to the city" to the one responsible for such a beautiful thing.

"Who is responsible for flying this kite?" the Mayor asked.

"I am," said the little boy holding with all his might to the beautiful big kite. He said, "I made this huge kite myself, with my own hands. I painted all of the colorful pictures on it, and I fly it!"

"I am," said the wind. "It is my breeze that keeps it in the air flying so big and beautiful. Unless I blow on it, it will not fly at all. I fly it!"

"Not so," claimed the kite's tail. "I make it sail and give it stability against the wind's blowing gusts. Without me the kite would spin out of control and not even the boy could save it from crashing to the earth. I fly the kite!"

So, who flies the kite?

They all do, don't they?

In the day-to-day hustle and bustle of work it easy to forget that everyone flies the kite. Without the team, the leader would never be successful. Without a good leader the team would fail. Both need each other. And each person on the team need one another as well. They all fly it!

What kite are you flying?