

**Ontario Provincial Council
The Catholic Women's League of Canada
75th Annual Meeting of Members – July 10 to 13, 2022
Oral Report**

Submitted by: Karen McDonald, Chairperson of Education and Health

When I was a child, I went with my grandmother on her monthly visits to members in nursing homes. These visits were reported at our general meetings and my mother and I kept the tradition. I once asked my grandmother why people were so happy to see us and she said that we might be their only visitors. I never realized it then but I witnessed loneliness. I admired Granny's dedication and now I know it was the League at work in her. She knew what it was to serve.

This memory came to me as I read about the isolation of residents in long term care during the pandemic. Imagine no family visits or outdoor activities, not being able to comfort a loved one as God called them home, and not being able to have a funeral to celebrate their life. Tragically, long-term care residents and those who were homebound witnessed limits on our government run health care system with understaffing, inadequate supplies, no air-conditioning, health care workers and PSWs pushed to exhaustion; spouses being separated; and lack of homecare support.

The education and health of so many people has been affected. The stress of schools closing and adjusting to virtual learning; seeing your doctor through a computer screen; businesses being forced to close; no socializing or hugs allowed; churches were closed or attendance was limited; and groceries shelves were bare. Loneliness and isolation was forced upon us.

Through it all, we witnessed the sisterhood of the League kept alive in unique ways in order to help others. We are dedicated women who serve and we do it well.

Jesus said "***clothe the naked***" - members sewed re-usable masks and knitted mitts, scarfs and socks to keep people safe and warm.

Jesus said "***comfort the afflicted***" - members prayed for our children and teachers and those in long-term care; conducted telephone wellness checks; and sent thinking of you cards.

Jesus said "***visit the sick***" - members found ways to communicate with loved ones in long-term care, grateful to staff who held a telephone so families could chat. I read about a couple celebrating their 71st wedding anniversary with a window visit since the husband's daily visits weren't allowed.

Jesus said "***feed the hungry***" - members delivered groceries; offered rides to appointments, prepared take-out meals for the homeless; and prepared homemade lunches for staff in long-term care homes.

Jesus said "***shelter the homeless***" - members volunteered on a compassionate care committee to combat homelessness.

Members continued postcard campaigns advocating for quality palliative care and improved mental health initiatives; educated themselves through webinars about human trafficking and medical assistance in dying; and found creative ways to hold *12 Hours of Prayer*.

All those years ago, Granny was on to something and I learned a life lesson from her. A simple visit by a dedicated CWL member can brighten someone's day and it can change a person ... it changed me.

This concludes my report.