

Bee Compassion into Action: A Community Life Challenge

As lay members of the church, we are called to walk with the people that we encounter, to respond to those who are suffering, to seek out those in need, to console, and to help. It is with this inspiration and in conjunction with our Provincial President Linda Squarzolo's theme of **Go Make a Difference** that we present the "**Bee Compassion Into Action**" challenge to League members across Ontario.

The Community Life standing committee covers a variety of topics. We chose three for this challenge ... Homelessness, Human Trafficking, and Truth and Reconciliation.

Gather as a group. Choose one of the topics. Look within your city/town where there are opportunities to engage with community members to effect change and where your actions may be felt the most. Begin each gathering with prayer. As you learn about a particular issue/concern, make notes, ask questions, seek out resources, raise awareness among members and the wider community, and look for solutions.

Prayer for Bee Compassion Into Action Challenge

Open our eyes, Lord,

to the injustices and inequities on our streets and in our communities,

Open our ears, Lord,

To the voices, often ignored.

Let our silence give a space for those voices to be heard.

Show us how to walk with these story tellers and give them hope in their need.

Open our hearts, Lord,

to *bee* compassionate and loving in our actions.

Holy Spirit, give us the inspiration

To take what we see and work to transform the lives of those in need.

Help us to use our gifts to enlighten our minds

And grow in love for our neighbour.

We offer our gratitude to *bee* the difference You envision for us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour

And the intercession of our patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Amen.

#1 – Homelessness (Service, Social Justice)

It seems that homelessness and housing insecurity is ubiquitous across this country. Large cities or small towns, rural or urban – they all are marked by individuals and families in need of shelter. The causes may be a result of poverty, mental health and addiction concerns, lack of affordable housing, or limited local support networks.

- Gather your group for the challenge.
- Begin with prayer.
- Take time to discuss the issue. What do you already know? In what areas are you less familiar? Assign members a specific aspect to investigate. Work together to gather as much information as you can. Compile the findings.

- **Possible questions to explore: (Learn, Listen)**
 1. Are there homeless people in your community? Are they visible or hidden?
 2. Does your community have a shelter for those without a home?
 3. What supports are available through municipal or other government levels or through non-governmental agencies or local groups?
 4. Does local media give attention to this issue?
 5. Does your local municipal government have any special committees to deal with homelessness or housing insecurity?

- **Raise awareness: (Act)**
 1. Attend a scheduled meeting on homelessness.
 2. Invite a guest speaker to inform your group on the issues.
 3. See if your group could offer assistance or support to agencies that help the homeless in your community.
 4. Write letters to politicians at every level of government to remind them of the need for secure housing for every citizen.
 5. Check out Ontario Resolution ON.15.04 Provision of Regulated Housing for the Chronic, Severely Mentally Ill. Does this speak to specific needs in your community? Follow through with the action plan.

#2 - Human Trafficking (Service, Social Justice)

Human trafficking exploitation exists in many forms. It involves victims being caused to provide sexual services or labour through force, coercion, deception and/or abuse of trust, power or authority. Human trafficking inflicts physical, psychological, and emotional trauma on victims. It is the contemporary form of slavery.

- Gather your group for the challenge.
- Begin with prayer.
- Take time to discuss the issue. What do you already know? In what areas are you less familiar? Assign members a specific aspect to investigate. Work together to gather as much information as you can. Compile the findings.

- **Possible questions to explore: (Learn, Listen)**
 1. Is human trafficking taking place in your community?
 2. Do you know how to recognize the signs of human trafficking?
 3. Do you know the hotline # for assistance if someone you suspect is being exploited?
 4. Are there support agencies for survivors in your community? What are those agencies and do they offer education for outside groups?
 5. What might the barriers be for someone looking for a way out, to be free?
 6. Is human trafficking a criminal offence in Canada? If so, do you know what legislation governs this offence?
 7. Who is the patron saint of Human Trafficking? When is the Feast day?
 8. When is the National Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Canada?

- **Raise awareness: (Act)**
 1. Once you have discovered and shared this knowledge with your group, create a storyboard for display at your meetings. Ask your Pastor if you may display it where parishioners can take time to read it.
 2. Share information at your general meeting, and ask each member of your team to prepare one point that stood out for them.
 3. Invite a guest speaker to inform your group on the issues.
 4. See if your group could offer assistance or support to agencies that help the victims of human trafficking in your community.
 5. Plan to hold a Prayer Service to end Human Trafficking. Create your own or use this one found on the CWL national website <https://www.cwl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/712-Human-Trafficking-Prayer-Service.pdf>

#3 – Truth & Reconciliation (Service, Social Justice)

On his Apostolic Journey to Canada, Pope Francis stated, *"I trust and pray that Christians and civil society in this land may grow in the ability to accept and respect the identity and the experience of the indigenous peoples. It is my hope that concrete ways can be found to make those peoples better known and esteemed, so that all may learn to walk together."*

(Address of the Holy Father: Meeting with Indigenous Peoples – First Nations, Métis and Inuit – at Maskwacis on July 25, 2022)

June is National Indigenous History Month honouring the history, heritage and diversity of Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) in Canada. It is a time of sharing and celebration culminating in **National Indigenous Peoples Day**. This is an opportunity to learn how our colonial history affected Indigenous peoples and to better understand the important contributions of Indigenous peoples to the economic, political, social and cultural fabric of Canada.

- Gather your group for the challenge.
- Begin with prayer.
- Take time to discuss the concerns. What do you already know? In what areas are you less familiar? Assign members a specific aspect to investigate. Work together to gather as much information as you can. Compile the findings.

- **Possible questions to explore: (Learn, Listen)**
 1. Who is the patron saint of Indigenous Peoples? When is the Feast Day?
 2. How many First Nation reserves are there in Ontario?
 3. What is a treaty? How many treaties cover the Province of Ontario?
 4. Determine which Indigenous communities (First Nation, Métis, Inuit) are located near your city/town.
 5. Learn about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action.
 6. Is there a Native Friendship Centre in your city/town?
 7. When is National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrated in Canada?
 8. When is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation recognized in Canada?

- **Raise awareness: (Act)**
 1. Plan to take part in activities for National Indigenous Peoples Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
 2. Call or visit a local Native Friendship Centre.
 3. Contact a First Nation (Band office, school, church) to inquire about a tour(s) to learn about the unique history and culture of First Nation peoples.
 4. Inquire about attending a Pow Wow to learn about the culture/traditions.
 5. Attend mass at a church in a First Nation community.
 6. Sign up for an online course(s) relating to Indigenous awareness.
 7. Inquire about hosting a KAIROS Blanket Exercise.