



WELCOME TO THE

ON-LINE NEWSLETTER

We're so glad you're here!

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Franciscan Jubilee Year

January 10, 2026 -
January 10, 2027

With the decree from the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See, a special jubilee year of St. Francis of Assisi to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint's death was proclaimed by Pope Leo XIV. Our Pope has stated this is a year of grace, through prayer and intercession to St. Francis. The story of Francis is a wonderful one and fits so closely to our national theme focus "blessed are the poor". His life of poverty and dedication to the poor is a witness to our mission today as we answer our baptismal call to service. Take time to learn more about St. Francis of Assisi, and all the graces this year can bring to each of us.

Colleen's Message of Joy

My Dear Sisters, discerning a message for this edition of our newsletter I read that February is the month dedicated to the Holy Family hence the connection to love and compassion. I recall former provincial spiritual advisor, Most Reverend Thomas Dowd, Bishop of Sault Ste Marie, provided us with an interesting teaching on love and the difference between love as understood by the secular society and Christian love (agape).



Our Christian understanding of love calls us to serve selflessly and with compassion all those in need of our assistance but, beyond that, it calls us to love those most difficult to love. In today's world there are all kinds of difficult people in our lives. "The coworker who is willing to do anything to get ahead, including taking credit for your ideas. The in-laws who always seem to be peering over your shoulder, critiquing your parenting skills, and offering "suggestions" for improvement. The child who knows exactly how to push your buttons to leave you exasperated and flustered again. The person in your ministry who is constantly complaining about your leadership, who thinks he has better ideas and communicates them with a sharp and biting tongue. The passive-aggressive friend who is kind one moment and gives you the cold shoulder the next. The list can go on and on. (desiringgod.org/articles/loving-difficult-people)

As we approach the liturgical season of Lent, take some time to think of everyone you interact with in your life and identify those difficult to love. Once you have those people in mind, think about the bible stories you are familiar with. I am sure you can come up with dozens of examples where Jesus, the prophets, and the disciples had to deal with difficult people. So, what did Jesus teach us about how to deal with difficult people? Simply put, keep on loving.

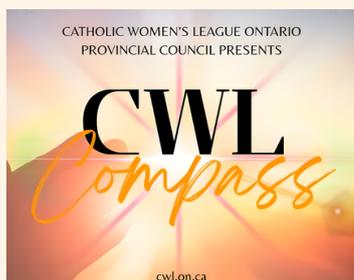
Love of Enemies. “But to those of you who are listening to me, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone strikes you on one cheek, offer him the other cheek as well, and should someone take your cloak, let him have your tunic as well.” (Matthew 5:39 - 40)



Rather than give up chocolate, candy, or chips for Lent, let's consider consciously thinking about the difficult people in our lives and practice Agape love; selfless, unconditional love without expectation of gain for self.

- ♥ Go out of your way to help your neighbour and create a caring community
- ♥ Focus on similarities between people or groups of people rather than their differences, find common ground
- ♥ Treat everyone, even strangers with kindness
- ♥ Love God selflessly, discern His will in your life

May God bless you as you go about living God's divine plan for you ... just remember ..keep on loving!



Introducing the Ontario Provincial CWL Compass Podcast!

Looking for inspiration, insight, and a fresh way to connect with the League?

The Compass Podcast is here to guide you!

Tune in, subscribe, and share with your sisters in faith:

Watch on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@OntarioProvincialCouncilCWL/podcasts>

Listen on Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/show/6yi4vvSJkjCOsM1wBUwDzT>

Find us on Amazon Music:

<https://music.amazon.ca/podcasts/90825266-27fd-4757-8728-07826dcf451f/cwl-compass-podcast>

Let the Ontario CWL Compass Podcast be your new way to journey with the CWL—listen today and help spread the word!

Vice-Presidents Corner

OPC Vice-President

Karen McDonald

Inquiring Minds Want to Know!

Periodically, we receive inquiries from the Contact Form on our provincial website (<https://cwl.on.ca/contact-us/>).



1) One was a request for information about rules of meetings once per month.

I recalled reading a resource entitled Guide to Simplifying Meeting and Reporting Processes (#636 under the Resources, Manuals tabs on the national website homepage www.cwl.ca), and I emailed it to the member. It provides hints and tools regarding: Frequency of Meetings and Reporting ... Productive Meeting Planning ... Delivery Methods ... Meeting Space ... Changing Venues ... Preparing Reports ... and much more.

I found this to be a valuable resource.

2) The second was a request for the manual for the Catholic Girls' League. I located the Catholic Girls' League Administration Manual (#647 under the Resources, Manuals tabs on the national website homepage www.cwl.ca). Accompanying the manual is a letter from National Chairperson of Service Madonna Clark. After responding to the member's inquiry by providing copies of the letter and manual, I took the opportunity to read the manual. I found this to be another valuable resource and guide to establishing a Catholic Girls' League within a parish.

I encourage members to access these types of resources that are available to us.

CONTACT US

Kindly reach out using the Contact Form if you require more information.



Pearls of Wisdom

OPC Past President

Linda Squarzolo

February Prayer Intention of Pope Leo XIV

Recently, I saw the list of the prayer intentions for 2026 by Pope Leo XIV. Catholics are asked to pray in February: “For children with incurable diseases. That children suffering from incurable illnesses and their families receive proper care and support and never lose strength and hope.”

That intention really resonated with me. We often pray for family and friends who are suffering from serious illnesses like cancer or heart disease. But how tragic is it for a child to endure such a diagnosis at a young age. When a person is afflicted with an illness, the effects resonate not just with the patient but the whole family.



Pope Leo asks us to pray that the patients and their families “receive proper care”. Today, with the modern advances in medicine, treatments have drastically changed and some diseases that were deemed to be “incurable” are now manageable. However, because hospitals continue to be underfunded by government funds, we need to constantly write letters to government to ensure health care is available when it is needed

Patients, and their families, require “support”. What services are available for people facing a health crisis? During these times, parents are needed at the bedside of their child. What programs are in place for them to take time away from work, child care for the other children in the family and financial assistance for the services they need? Because there is no children’s hospital in Northern Ontario, an organization was formed to provide help to such families. *Northern Ontario Families of Children with Cancer* is a volunteer-based group which offers financial assistance for living and medical expenses, transportation costs, accommodations, long distance phone cards, palliative support and other programs. Summer camps like, *Campfire Circle* (formerly Camp Trillium) and *Camp Quality* offer special programs for oncology patients and their siblings. As individuals and as an organization, we can provide the “support” Pope Leo requests.

Lastly, Pope Leo asks us to pray that they “never lose strength and hope”. People facing ill health need to hear words of encouragement and positive outcome. In 2003, my 10-month-old grandson, Jacob, was diagnosed with a childhood cancer a few weeks before Christmas. The outlook was grim because of the large mass they found. He was sent to the Children’s Hospital in Ottawa. Over the next seven years he and his family faced chemotherapy, surgery, complications and a stem cell transplant. With countless prayers, the expertise of many doctors, the support of family and friends and God’s intervention, Jacob is now cured. He is 22 years old and working as a registered practical nurse.



Let us offer our prayers for afflicted children and their families that they too can receive such a miracle.



Your Love

Bless us with Love, O Merciful God;
That we may Love as you Love!

That we may show patience, tolerance,
Kindness, caring and love to all!

Give me knowledge; O giver of Knowledge,
That I may be one with my Universe
and Mother Earth!

O Compassionate One, grant compassion unto us;
That we may help all fellow souls in need!

Bless us with your Love O God.

Bless us with your Love.

- Author Unknown

Minute By Minute

OPC Secretary
Lisa Henry



February: A Month to Live Love and Compassion in Action



As we enter February, our League invites us to reflect deeply on Love and Compassion—virtues that sit at the heart of our call to *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission*. The national focus, “Blessed Are the Poor,” reminds us that compassion is not an idea but a movement of the heart that becomes visible through simple, intentional acts.

For us in Secretary/Communications roles, this theme is especially meaningful. We are the storytellers, the bridge-builders, and the quiet threads that keep our councils connected. Every message we send, every record we keep, and every communication we share has the power to uplift, include, and remind others that they matter.

February offers a beautiful opportunity to let our administrative work become ministry. Consider encouraging your councils to embrace small acts of love that echo Christ’s compassion:

- Mail a handwritten card or letter to someone who may feel forgotten or lonely
- Drop off a note, prayer card, or small treat to brighten a member’s day
- Send a thoughtful message online to someone who needs encouragement
- Call or text a member who hasn’t been seen in a while
- Speak kind, affirming words in the moment—especially in person

These gestures may seem simple, yet they carry profound spiritual weight. They remind the poor in spirit, the lonely, the overwhelmed, and the weary that they are seen and cherished.

May our communications this month be instruments of Christ’s love, sparking warmth, connection, and compassion across our province.



The Story of Valentine's Day Begins in the Third Century

The emperor was Claudius II and the Christian was Valentinus. Claudius ordered all Romans to worship 12 gods and that to associate with Christians was a crime punishable by death. Valentinus was dedicated to following Christ and even the threat of death did not keep him from practicing his beliefs. He was arrested and imprisoned.

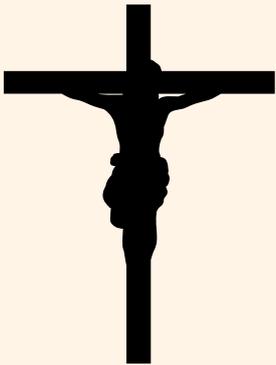
While in prison, the jailer noted that he was a man of learning and asked that his daughter, Julia, be allowed to have lessons with him. Julia had a quick mind and had been blind since birth. Valentinus read stories of Roman history, taught math, described the world of nature and he told Julia about God. One day she asked if God really hears our prayers and Valentinus replied that God hears each one. He went on to say that God does what is best for us if we will only believe in Him. Julia replied that she truly believes and prays each morning and night that she may see everything she has learned about. They sat quietly together in the cell, when a brilliant light entered the cell. A radiant Julia exclaimed to Valentinus that she could see! He knelt in prayer and said, "praise be to God". On the eve of his death, Valentinus wrote a note to Julia, urging her to stay close to God and signed it "From Your Valentine". He was executed the next day, February 14, 270 AD near a gate that was later named Porta Valentini in his memory. He was buried at what is now the Church of Praxedes in Rome. It is said that Julia planted a pink blossomed almond tree near his grave. Today, the almond tree remains a symbol of abiding love and friendship.

May Love & Affection Be Yours on Valentine's Day

**Submitted by Wilma Vanderzwaag
OPC Administrative Assistant**

Love, an Expression of our Faith

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive," Dalai Lama.



The ultimate expression of God's immense love and compassion for humanity was Jesus's sacrifice on the cross for us. Throughout his life Jesus demonstrated his passion for others by blessing and serving the poor, sick and distressed.

As members of the League we strive to model Jesus's acts of mercy and his command to love one another as we first are loved by God.

We are called to share God's love through ministry and service to our neighbours and communities. This is deeply integrated into our mission of faith.

The parable of the Good Samaritan remains relevant today. It demonstrates a human example of active, compassionate love for someone in need, requiring personal involvement and humanity.



We open our hearts like the good Samaritan, to recognize the dignity of each human, to be kind to one another and use the gifts of the Holy Spirit to guide us and transform our actions. By allowing God into our hearts, we are fuelled with a loving and compassionate heart.

Our compassion moves us to extend empathy to everyone, including strangers. We walk together in faith and shared mission, in solidarity with all people. How can we be good Samaritans in our communities?



Our national theme, *"Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission"* calls us to remember that God sent his only son to us so that we might have life through and with him and that this divine life is carried into our every act of love.

National has asked us to focus on "blessed are the poor". Councils across the province are working to care for the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized and those who seek God in their lives.

Pope Leo XIV said, "As Christ loved with the heart of man, you are called to love with the heart of Christ". An open heart is not just about feeling; it motivates action, a conscious choice to connect with others, recognize their struggles, and respond with love and support.

"I have loved you..." Jesus' words provided the title for Pope Leo XIV's first Apostolic Exhortation, "Dilexi te", on love for the poor. You can read the full text of here: [APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION DILEXI TE](#)

As the national theme states, let us ask the Holy Spirit to ignite our hearts with the fire of God's passionate love and to make us instruments of His love to our sisters in the League, our families, parishes, and communities.

Our hope is that God's Word and presence in the Eucharist will re-ignite a spiritual fire within us to share His love with others. That our passion will continue to compel.



Ontario Provincial Convention in Thunder Bay, July 5-8, 2026

Hotel Registration for the OPC 79th Annual Provincial Convention

LOCATION: Valhalla Inn

CALL IN: (807) 577-1121, (807) 964-1121

EMAIL: reservations@valhallahotel.ca

To ensure receiving the special group rate, attendees must identify the group name and/or group code when making the reservations.

All individual reservations must be guaranteed with a credit card.

Please quote the Group Booking Number below:

Ontario CWL 2026 Convention (CI) - 1371903

Heart to Heart Campaign

Approximately 1 in 5 children and youth in Ontario have a mental health challenge. About 70% of mental health challenges have their onset in childhood or youth. Early identification and intervention is critical and can lead to improved achievement in school and better health outcomes in life.



You can read more about the signs and symptoms of child and youth mental health by going to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) website (<https://ontario.cmha.ca/mental-health/child-and-youth-mental-health/>). The resources in this section were created by CMHA Ontario with support from Kids Help Phone and the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services.



Youth Mental Health Canada (YMHC) is a not-for-profit, charitable community-based organization, offering essential, accessible, and meaningful resources to support the most important role of all –encouraging the healthy growth of young people.

They provide the tools needed to meet the challenges of education, health, and life. Their nationwide “Heart to Heart” campaign was launched in January 2024. There are many ways that members can contribute to youth mental health support, change, and action. The Heart to Heart Campaign is asking for volunteers to craft and send hearts.



Schools create peer support teams and send hearts with messages of support to students who are absent from school due to mental health challenges. Students receive them as reminders that they are part of a caring community.

To send Hearts with your message of support contact ymhc.ngo/hearts. Your actions serve as a reminder that the student is not alone in their mental health journey.

Also, this month is **Rare Disease Day** (February 28): The Day is an observance held on the last day of February to raise awareness for rare diseases and improve access to treatment and medical representation for individuals with rare diseases and their families. The date is chosen because in leap years it is February 29, the rarest date <https://www.rarediseaseday.org/>

Pink Shirt Day (February 25) is an annual event against bullying held in Canada. Participants wear pink shirts and attend or host informative events to raise awareness about bullying, particularly in schools. Pink Shirt Day was started in 2007 in Canada. <https://www.pinkshirtday.ca/>



White Cane Week: Feb. 1-7

<https://ccbnational.net/shaggy/white-cane-week/> The objective of White Cane Week is to provide education and raise awareness about the challenges faced by people living with vision loss. White Cane Week has evolved to reflect the changing situations of the blind community, and it emphasizes the equal capabilities and talents of people who are blind and partially sighted.

White Cane Week is an opportunity to provide information and education about the effects of vision loss for all people in Ontario and work towards creating more supportive, inclusive communities.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hilarion Mitchell

World Day of Social Justice (February 20th)

*Little children, let us love not in word or speech
but in deed and truth.*

1 John 3:18

February will focus on **Love and Compassion** for the national theme, *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission ... Blessed are the Poor*. Social justice reflects love and compassion by transforming care into action for those who are hurting, excluded, or treated unfairly. We uplift others and work for their well-being, revealing the love of Christ by our actions.



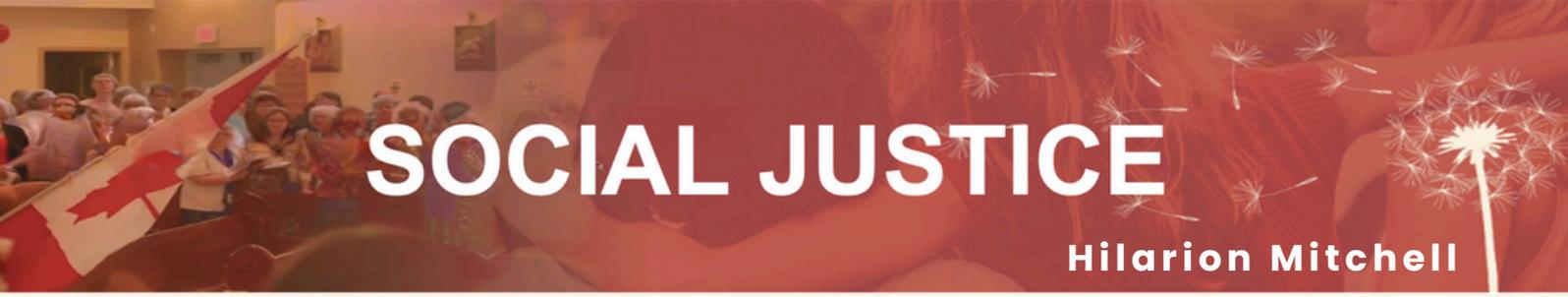
Human Trafficking

Statistics Canada Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2024 report, human trafficking is a serious human rights violation occurring both domestically and internationally. It most often involves sexual exploitation or forced labour. Police reported 5,070 human trafficking incidents, an average rate of 1.2 per 100,000 people.

Most incidents (83%) occurred in Canada's largest urban centres. Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan had the highest reports. Victims are primarily women and girls, while most accused are men and boys.

Help is available through the **Canadian Human Trafficking 24/7 Hotline at 1-833-900-1010** or **website** for those being trafficked or know someone who is, or is a survivor.





SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hilarion Mitchell

- Feb. 06: International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation
- Feb. 08: Feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita: Patron Saint of Sudan and human-trafficking survivors
- Feb. 08: International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking
- Feb. 22: National Human Trafficking Awareness Day
- Feb. 22: IWIN I'm Worth It Now Red Sand Sunday raises awareness and sparks conversation, encouraging communities to recognize human trafficking warning signs and connect victims with help. CWL councils are invited to host Red Sand Ceremonies at their parishes. Contact iwincalgary@gmail.com for copies of the prayer service, red sand supplies

Legislation

Bill C-9: Combating Hate Act: The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB), December 4, 2025 **letter** to Prime Minister Mark Carney, raised serious concerns about Bill C-9 An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda, hate crime and access to religious or cultural places). The CCCB opposed the proposed removal of the long-standing religious exemption in Section 319(3)(b) and urged the government to protect sincerely held religious beliefs rooted in sacred texts. Bill C-9 has passed first and second readings and is being reviewed by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

- Write to your Member of Parliament (MP), the committee, and pray for the protection of religious freedom in Canada.

Bill C-218 and the I Got Better Campaign: Tamara Jensen, MP, Cloverdale-Langley City, BC, Bill C-218, "An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)" also known as "The Right to Recover Act". This bill excludes mental illness as the sole criterion to be eligible for MAiD in Canada.

- Write to your Member of Parliament (MP) to support the bill.
- Participate in the "I Got Better" Campaign, sponsored by Andrew Lawton, MP, St. Thomas, ON, that hope is always possible for those suffering from mental illness.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION IS SHINING BRIGHT!

On **February 22, 2026**, the CN Tower will glow blue in powerful solidarity with victims and survivors of human trafficking.

This date marks the **National Day of Awareness of Human Trafficking**—a moment for all of us to pause, pray, and recommit ourselves to building awareness and taking action against this devastating crime.

Blue, the colour of hope and vigilance in the fight against human trafficking, will light up the Toronto skyline throughout the evening, broken only by a 5-minute light show at the top and bottom of every hour.

CWL members are warmly invited to witness this meaningful illumination in person! Gather, stand in solidarity, and let your presence be a visible sign of our collective commitment to justice and dignity for all. If you attend, snap a photo and send it to: opcsecretary24@gmail.com, and torontodiocesecwlpres@gmail.com. Your images will be shared on our social media channels and will help us celebrate our shared mission and amplify awareness across the province.

If you can't be there in person, the lighting will also be visible via the CN Tower live webcam: <https://www.cntower.ca/live-views>

This special lighting request was submitted by the Toronto Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada, Social Justice Chair, as part of our ongoing commitment to advocacy, awareness, and hope.

Blue for the Broken. Light for the Lost. Hope for All



Beyond the Bake Sale:

Fresh recipes for Council Fun and Growth

Igniting Passion Through Sacred Stillness



In joyful alignment with the new national theme *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission*, the Catholic Women's League at **Holy Name of Jesus Parish, North Bay** is embracing a fresh and deeply contemplative way of nurturing spiritual growth.

This winter, the council is hosting a series of 3-Hour Silent Mini Retreats designed to help participants listen attentively to God's quiet prompting and express their reflections through **art, poetry, or prose**.

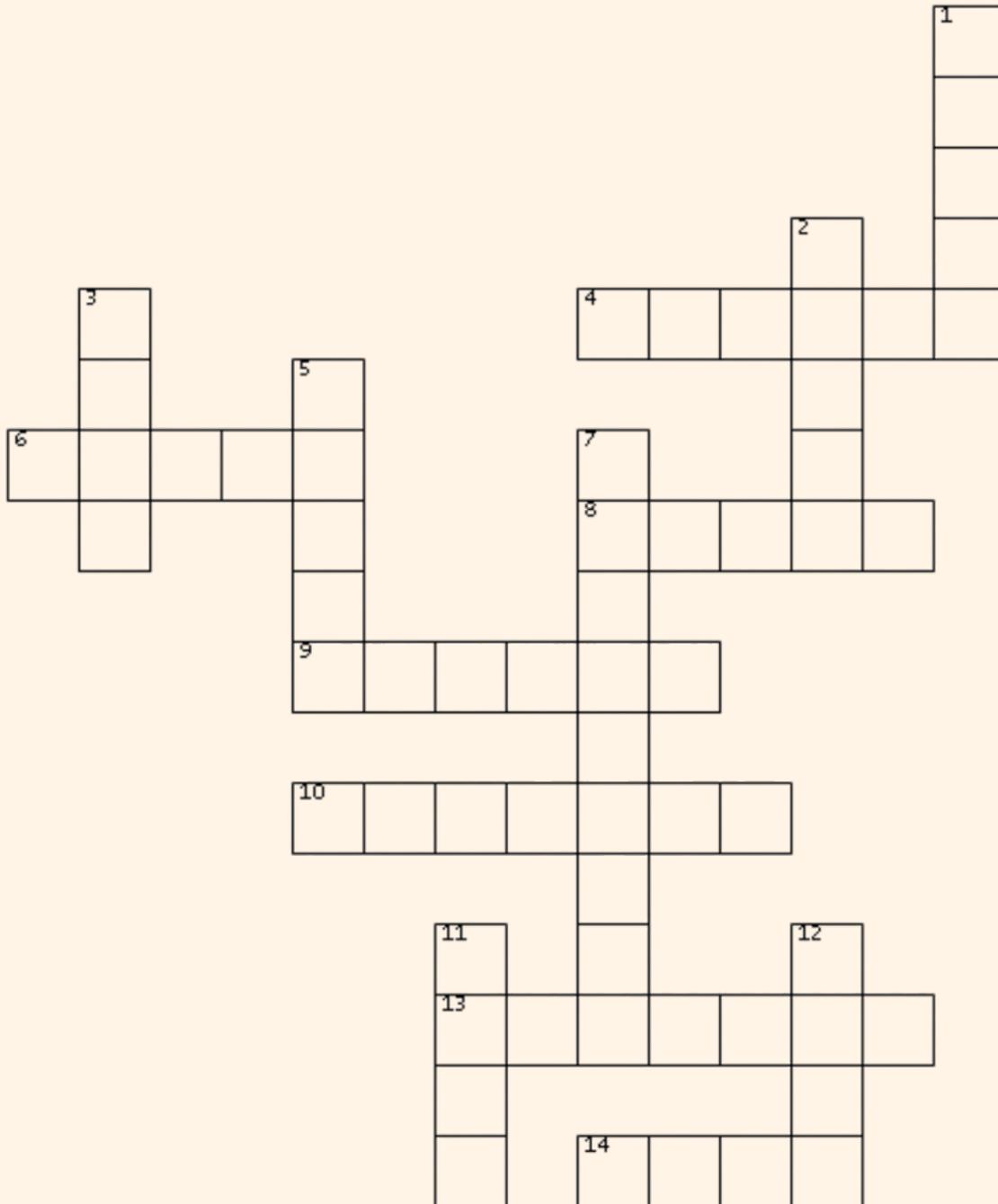
Held in January, February, and March 1–4 p.m., each retreat offers a gentle rhythm of prayerful creativity. Participants may gather beforehand for an optional lunch from 12–1 p.m., followed by a warm-up art exercise from 1–1:45 p.m. The heart of the retreat unfolds from 2–4 p.m., with time set aside for reading, reflection, and optional group sharing for those who feel called to speak.

All materials are provided, though attendees are welcome to bring personal art supplies or a journal. Whether someone is an experienced artist or simply curious about new ways to pray, the retreat invites every woman to discover how the Holy Spirit stirs uniquely within her.



By creating space for silence, creativity, and community, Holy Name of Jesus CWL is living the national theme with intention—helping members rekindle their spiritual passion so they may continue to empower Christ's mission in their families, parish, and the wider world. This is Beyond the Bake Sale in the truest sense: a ministry of presence, prayer, and Spirit-led renewal.

CROSSWORD: Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission



ACROSS

4. Sent to ignite our hearts
6. What illuminates others as we journey together
8. One of the virtues asked to increase
9. Central devotion of prayer
10. Virtue paired with faith and hope
13. What we are empowered with passion for
14. Virtue paired alongside faith and charity

DOWN

1. What beats together with ours as one
2. What we place fully in Jesus
3. Describes the Spirit sent to ignite hearts
5. To whom the prayer is addressed
7. What we offer daily to Jesus
11. Final word of the prayer
12. What instruments we are called to be