

WELCOME TO THE
ON-LINE NEWSLETTER

We're so glad you're here!

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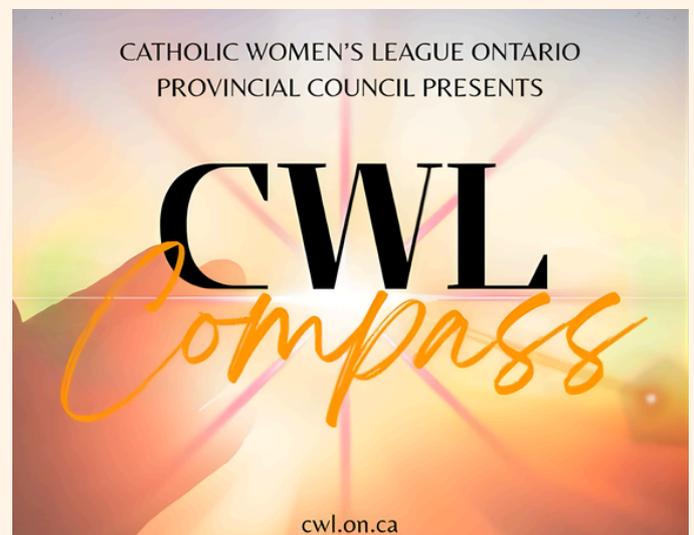
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*Discover the Ontario Provincial CWL
Compass Podcast! Inspiration,
connection, and faith-filled
conversations—ready to watch and
share.*

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

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

Spread the word and enjoy the journey!

Answers to last month's crossword



ACROSS:

4. SPIRIT
6. FLAME
8. FAITH
9. SACRED
10. CHARITY
13. MISSION
14. HOPE

DOWN:

1. HEART
2. TRUST
3. HOLY
5. JESUS
7. OFFERINGS
11. AMEN
12. LOVE

Colleen's Message of Joy

As I write this, Lent is about to unfold in just a few days. Embracing this Lenten season of reflection and renewal provides an opportunity to ignite our passion for faith. In our fast-paced world, where daily demands often drown out quiet moments, Lent encourages us to slow down, listen for God's gentle voice, and rediscover what sets our hearts ablaze for His purpose.



Spending quiet time with God can spark this inner flame—a few moments of stillness before sunrise, a whispered prayer, or a reflective walk outdoors. Reading Scripture, journaling, or savoring the beauty of creation opens our hearts and invites God in. In these moments, we allow space for inspiration to grow, for our love to be rekindled, and for God to empower us to serve and love more deeply. Lent reminds us that as we ignite our faith, we are also empowered to participate in His mission—not to be afraid, but to speak openly about our faith and God's intense love for each of His children.

Let this Lent be marked by intentional quiet, honest encounters with God, and a renewed sense of our divine purpose shared with the world. Trusting that God is near—offering guidance, strength, and renewal—let us spread the joy of His gospel. As you walk toward Easter, may you discover peace and hope, knowing you are cherished, called, and empowered for His mission.





Pearls of Wisdom

OPC Past President

Linda Squarzolo

Council Donations

Lent is a season for penance and almsgiving for all Catholics. During the preparations for Easter, the focus is to deny ourselves the luxuries in life to develop a kinship with the less fortunate in the world. In almsgiving we share our wealth with those that are lacking.



How can we apply those same principles to our work in the League?

The Service Standing Committee provides us with the opportunities for both penance and almsgiving. Many members give their time to serve meals at soup kitchens, distribute food at food banks, collect and distribute warm clothing, assist in school programs and support the lonely, shut-ins and bereaved. They are giving of themselves, their possessions and their time.



Councils raise funds to support other organizations. What charities does your council donate to? As a Catholic organization, our main purpose should be to support mostly Catholic charities.

There are many that rely on our help. Consider the National Voluntary Funds that collect money for Catholic Missions in Canada, Development & Peace, the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) and Coady International. Other worthwhile Catholic charities are Chalice, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, as well as our local parish and Catholic schools. Other secular organizations do good work, no doubt and rely on the donations.

However, if we, as Catholics,
do not support our religious organizations,
who will?



Your Lenten Journey

"Lent stimulates us to let the Word of God penetrate our life and, in this way, to know the fundamental truth: Who we are, where we come from, where we must go, what path we must take in life." Pope Benedict XVI

Lent is a period of preparation, a time of prayer, fasting and giving alms but it is also an invitation to deepen our relationship with God. We are invited to spend more time with God, to be enriched by God's presence.

Lent is a personal spiritual journey of faith, different for everyone. It is centered on 40 days: Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday and honours Jesus' fast in the wilderness and his ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

Ask yourself, has Lent left you a better person than before you started the season? Lent should be a turning point in your life, a chance to cultivate lifelong spiritual habits that last beyond 40 days, to continue to grow in Holiness with God.



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent and repentance as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter. The ashes on our foreheads in the shape of a cross are a sign of humility and conversion. "Repent and believe in the Gospel." They remind us of our need for God's mercy, our call to renew our commitment and turn our hearts back to God for His great gift.

With the goal of drawing closer to God, Lent can be simply the desire to improve our prayer life. The *Catechism* describes the Catholic Faith pillars, the basic ways of knowing and interacting with God. *Prayer in the life of faith* is one pillar. Pope Francis said: "Prayer is the breath of faith, [It is] like a cry that issues from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God."

Not to take away from fasting and giving alms, they matter too, but the reality is that prayer is significant during Lent and in our lives.



The national theme symbol shows a large heart symbolizing the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the crown of thorns to remind us that we have been saved by His passion and his ultimate sacrifice. This season provides an opportunity to reflect on His sacrifice and deepen our prayer lives.

We all worship and encounter God in our own ways. *What new actions might we bring to help us let go of our own desires and align with God's call for us?*

On the **World Day of Prayer, March 6, 2026**, reflect on the global unity of Christian women praying together. Councils and members are encouraged to attend a local Prayer Service or host one at your parish. May we embody Jesus' invitation: *'Come to me, all you who are weary'*. Together, let us become channels of God's rest in our troubled world through prayer.



Wherever your Lenten faith journey leads you should be manageable, fruitful and joyful, time to happily give to others and receive God's grace.

Lenten Message and Prayer

Pope's Lenten message: Abstain from harsh words and rash judgement

Pope Leo XIV invites Catholics to open ourselves to listening, fasting, and community, urging us to abstain from words of hatred in order to make space for words of hope and peace.

"Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves," he said. "Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities."

If we do so, we will let words of hatred "give way to words of hope and peace."

Prayer for Civility

God of all compassion,

You call us to love one another as you have loved us.

*In this time of Lent, help us to see our sisters and brothers
as truly beloved children of God.*

*Help us to fast from incivility and feast on your love for each
one of us.*

*Help us to fast from discord and feast on the knowledge
that you have created each person in your own image.*

*Help us to fast from fear of those with whom we disagree
and feast on the joy community brings us.*

*Help us to fast from timidity when we hear hurtful
language and feast on sharing the good news of our God-
given dignity.*

*Help us to fast from the desire to win arguments and feast
on compassion shared in understanding.*

*Help us to fast from assumptions and feast on listening
deeply to the stories of our community.*

*Lord, our God, be with us in this time of fasting and
repentance, in this time of quiet and simplicity.*

*Let us turn to you as the source of our joyfulness and our
first giver of love.*

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen

USCCB

service

Sue Lubowitz

"Give us this day our daily bread"



Every year, approaching Lent, we notice the same question being asked: What are you giving up for Lent? Perhaps, instead we can add something for the season. The three traditional spiritual practices during Lent are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

This Lent, why not extend the scope of almsgiving to incorporate the Works of Mercy? John's words point the way, "Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action". (John 3:18) Giving alms reminds us that we are part of a community, a Church, the Body of Christ. Consider what is possible and within your resources to contribute for Lent, in addition to what you may already do. This will be different for each person in a community of faith. Could you volunteer at a soup kitchen or food bank? Could you organize or help with a fundraising drive for a local charity or a project within your parish?



I invite you to change the focus of Lent from a spiritual practice of "giving up" to one of "adding in," a practice that deepens your connection with God and brings a sense of blessing to elders, youth, young parents, children, singles, couples –to all those around you.

Little acts of blessing shared every day add up through the 40 days of Lent. The national standing committee chairs have distributed the 40 Days of Lent calendar to suggest options for each day. Use it as a springboard for action in your council.

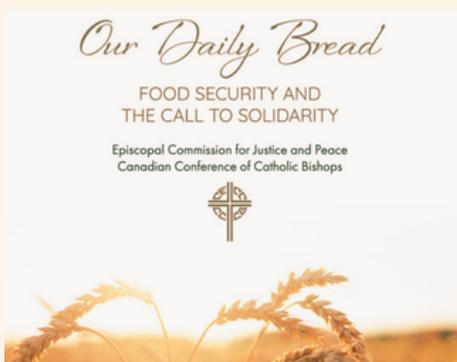
There are also several special opportunities for almsgiving through donations to the CWL National Funds:

❖ **Development and Peace - Caritas Canada (1% Program)**: In the 2024–2026 period, the League is supporting two main projects aimed at fighting food insecurity for women and young people in the Sahel region and Somalia.

❖ **Coady International Institute**: The League continues to support a scholarship fund for women to attend leadership programs at St. Francis Xavier University, with over \$13,000 in contributions reported previously.

❖ **Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA)**: Funds support Eastern Catholic churches, specifically a Shepherd’s Field Hospital and an Infant Welfare Centre in the Holy Land.

❖ **Catholic Missions In Canada (CMIC)**: Contributions are made to the CWL Mission Partners Fund to support religious education programs.



On World Day of the Poor (November 16, 2025), the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops released a pastoral letter titled “Our Daily Bread”.

Councils could study this letter during a meeting or Lenten soup event as it focuses on food security and solidarity. Currently, more than 1 in 10 people worldwide are suffering severe food insecurity and over 3 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet.

The letter can be found at:

https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Our-Daily-Bread_EN.pdf

What will you choose to add to your Lenten practice this year?

I pray that your Lent be a holy time of reflection leading you into a closer relationship with God.



SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hilarion Mitchell



Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out; judge righteously; defend the rights of the poor and needy.
Proverbs 31:8-9

For March, the national theme *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission! Blessed are the Poor* focus is on the **Lenten Season of Giving**. Lent is synonymous with "giving things up" and a personal endurance test. Connecting this liturgical season of giving with social justice moves from a personal spiritual practice into a collective movement for equity.

Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving

Prayer, forms our conscience, aligning our hearts with God's desire for a more just and compassionate world. *Almsgiving* is about compassion and generosity with a detachment from material things. It is charitable giving through acts of justice.

Fasting also takes on a social dimension by simplifying our lifestyles, we become more aware of the inequities that deprive others of the necessities of life. Lent becomes not only a preparation for Easter but a transformative journey that renews both the individual and society where mercy and justice intersect.



Connecting Lenten Practices to Social Justice

Prayer (Awareness)

-In addition to prayer for personal needs, pray for others using any of the seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching as a weekly prayer guide.

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person.
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation.
- Rights and Responsibilities.
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God's Creation





Fasting (Solidarity)

- Fast in solidarity with those experiencing hunger or food insecurity.
- Use funds to support local food banks, shelters, etc.
- Host conversations on systemic causes of poverty and impact of the social determinants of health.

Hilarion Mitchell

Almsgiving (Systemic Change)

Traditional almsgiving focuses on the act of the giver. Social justice-oriented giving focuses on the rights of the receiver.

- Move beyond charity to support organizations addressing root causes.
- Encourage advocacy (letter writing, policy engagement).
- Commit to reducing waste, conserving energy, or eating more simply.

Ontario Provincial Council Government Visit



A delegation from the provincial executive will be visiting and hosting a luncheon reception at Queens Park on Thursday April 23rd. The visit will also include attending Question Period. Invitations will be sent to the 124 Member of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) from all parties for them and their parliamentary staff and policy advisors to attend.

Active provincial resolutions will be presented. We will be sending a letter to members to encourage their MPP to attend.

World Water Day is observed on March 22nd. The theme for 2026 is *Where water flows, equality grows*. Three key messages.

- The global water crisis affects everyone – but not equally
- Women must shape the future of water
- Where water flows, equality grows



Earth Hour 20th anniversary will be held on March 28th at 8:30 pm. It is not just turning off your lights for one symbolic hour but also spending that hour doing something positive for the planet.

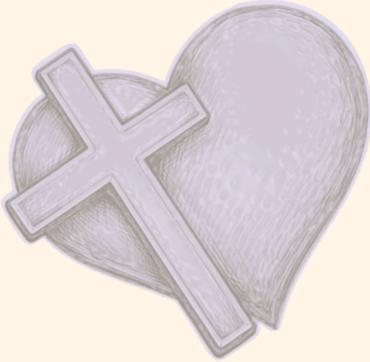
Minute By Minute

OPC Secretary

Lisa Henry



Secretary/Communications - A Lenten Season of Giving



March draws us deeper into Lent, a season that invites us to pause, to give, and to let our hearts be stirred anew. When we embrace the National Theme—Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission—our Lenten practices take on a vibrant purpose. They become sparks of renewal, small flames that illuminate the presence of Christ in our daily encounters.

The national focus, *Blessed are the Poor*, reminds us that Christ is closest to those who carry heavy burdens. In our roles as secretaries and communicators, we hold a unique ministry of accompaniment. Every notice we share, every story we highlight, every message we craft has the potential to lift someone's spirit, to connect a woman to her parish community, or to shine a light on the quiet acts of service happening all around us.

This Lenten Season of Giving is a beautiful moment to celebrate the richness within our own councils. CWL members come from many diverse backgrounds, professions, and life experiences — each one a gift to the Body of Christ. **Consider using your parish bulletin or your council's social media page to:**

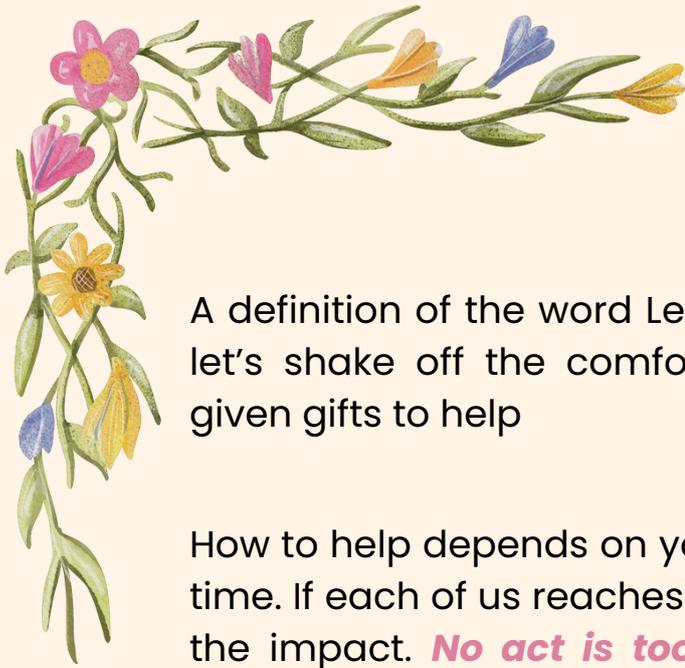
- Share a short story
- Spotlight a member, or
- Highlight an act of service in your parish.

These simple features not only honour the women who serve but also help others see themselves reflected in our mission.

As we communicate with intention and joy, we create spaces where hearts are warmed, curiosity is sparked, and the Holy Spirit quietly invites others to journey with us.



May this season rekindle our passion to serve boldly, love generously, and empower His mission in every corner of our province.



Lent

A definition of the word Lent says the meaning is springtime—so let's shake off the comfort of hibernation and share our God given gifts to help

How to help depends on your abilities and talents as well as your time. If each of us reaches out during Lent to help others imagine the impact. **No act is too small.** Remember, when we give of ourselves to others, it benefits us more than those we assist. Jesus reached out to all in need no matter who they were.

We all want to be more like Jesus and have a closer relationship with Him. Let's imitate Him by giving of ourselves in some way to those most in need. Your example may be contagious to others. Work together with some of your sisters in the League. You will have a larger impact by joining together--remember team work makes the dream work! Let each one of us be a light for all to see!



"From today onwards, I am going to strive for the greatest purity of soul, that the rays of God's grace may be reflected in all their brilliance."

St. Faustina

**Submitted by Wilma Vanderzwaag
OPC Administrative Assistant**



Beyond the Bake Sale:

Fresh recipes for Council Fun and Growth



St Peter's CWL Started the Year in Sisterhood and Joy

St. Peter's CWL, North Bay, stepped into 2026 with warmth, welcome, and a whole lot of heart as members gathered for our New Year's Meet & Greet Social on Wednesday, January 14th.

✨ The hall was filled with friendly chatter, shared laughter, and the comforting aroma of light refreshments as familiar faces reconnected and new friendships began to form.



It was the kind of gathering that reminds us why community matters – a space where everyone feels seen, supported, and at home.

✨ The highlight of the gathering was a beautiful act of service: **creating Valentine cards for our sick and shut-in sisters**. Under the gentle guidance of Bonny Perron and Pam Harley, members poured their creativity and compassion into each card.

While all materials were provided, the true offering was the love, care, and prayerful intention woven into every message written and every heart-shaped embellishment placed.

This simple yet meaningful gesture echoed our national focus, **"Blessed Are the Poor,"** calling us to remember that presence, kindness, and connection are gifts we can share freely. As we embrace the new CWL theme, **"Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission,"** this gathering served as a spark – rekindling our collective spirit and reminding us of the purpose behind our service.



Members left feeling renewed, inspired, and ready to continue our mission with joy, purpose, and love. What a beautiful way to begin the year together.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF
THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA

79th Annual Provincial Convention & Annual Meeting of Members

JULY 5 - 8, 2026

THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO

VALHALLA HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTRE

Details & Registration Information can be found at:

cwl.on.ca/conventions/



Ignite Your Passion

Empower His Mission

*United as Sisters in Christ - gathering from near and far
to build the Kingdom of God with joy!*

Social Justice in Action Is Shining Bright! ❤️

Ontario Councils Light the Night Blue – February 22, 2026

On February 22, 2026, something extraordinary happened across Ontario. From the shores of Lake Superior to the heart of the GTA, CWL councils united in a powerful, hope-filled display of solidarity for the **National Day of Awareness of Human Trafficking**.

Landmarks across the province lit up in brilliant blue—each one a beacon of compassion, courage, and commitment. Thanks to the advocacy and heartfelt requests of CWL members, the CN Tower, Mississauga Civic Centre Clock Tower, Vaughan City Hall, Niagara Falls, Thunder Bay City Hall, Sacred Heart in Sioux Lookout, and St. Martin of Tours in Terrace Bay all glowed blue in support of our awareness campaign. Their light joined countless local monuments, parish signs, and community spaces illuminated by councils determined to shine hope into the darkness.

This year's provincial effort was nothing short of inspiring. The CN Tower's blue glow—punctuated by a five-minute light show at the top and bottom of every hour—became a symbol of prayer and perseverance. Councils gathered in person, standing shoulder to shoulder in witness to dignity and justice. Others tuned in through the CN Tower's live webcam, united in spirit and purpose.



CN Tower, Toronto



St. Martin of Tours Parish,
Terrace Bay



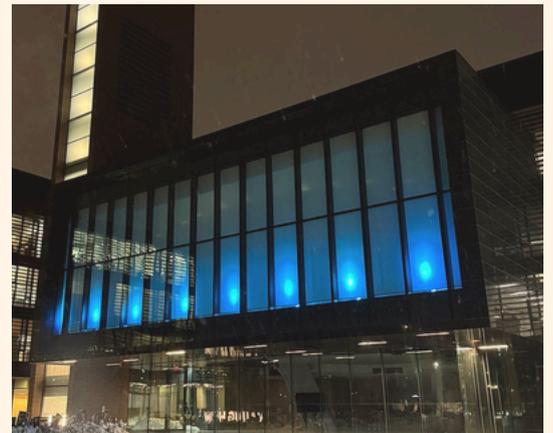
Niagara Falls



Mississauga Civic Centre Clock Tower



Sacred Heart Parish, Sioux Lookout



Vaughan City Hall

**But the true light came from you—
the women of the Catholic Women’s League!**

Your heart, your leadership, and your unwavering dedication to social justice made this campaign shine. Every photo shared, every gathering organized, every conversation sparked helped amplify awareness across Ontario. Together, you created a wave of hope that reached far beyond the monuments themselves.

And now, we look ahead....

Mark Your Calendars: February 22, 2027



Let’s make next year even brighter!

We’re inviting every council in Ontario to begin planning now. Whether it’s lighting a local monument, hosting a prayer vigil, creating a parish display, or partnering with your municipality—your action makes a difference. Imagine what we can accomplish when even more councils join in, each shining a light in their own hometown.

Together, we can continue to build awareness, inspire conversation, and stand in solidarity with those affected by human trafficking. This is Social Justice in Action—alive, visible, and filled with hope.

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