

WELCOME TO THE  
**ON-LINE NEWSLETTER**

*We're so glad you're here!*

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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!***

### Hotel registration for the OPC 79th Annual Provincial Convention

Location: Valhalla Inn, Thunder Bay

Call In: 1-(807) 964-1121

Email: [reservations@valhallahotel.ca](mailto:reservations@valhallahotel.ca)

**To ensure receiving the special group rate you must use the Group Booking Number:  
Ontario CWL 2026 Convention (CI) 1371903**

Reservations must be guaranteed with a credit card

<https://cwl.on.ca/conventions/>

# Colleen's Message of Joy

As you are likely aware, the national theme, *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission!* had a focus declared as *Blessed are the Poor*. Suggestions for each month were created by the national standing chairpersons with the month of May 2026 dedicated to Mary, Mother of the Poor.



How fitting it is that this is also the time of year where we honour Mary with a crowning ceremony at diocesan conventions and recognize Palliative Care Week and the national initiative of 12 hours for Palliative Care. Those facing terminal illness and end of life care are many times poor in spirit. The Ontario Provincial Council will host a 12 hour Zoom from 8 am to 8 pm and a live-streamed mass at 7 pm on May 4. We will explore palliative and hospice care and offer prayers for all those facing end of life decisions. Please join us May 4 whenever you are able at the [link here](#) Meeting ID: 812 9173 1921. Passcode: 4mKm4E. The link for mass will be circulated on our website and through social media closer to the day.



Let us live by the example of Mary and of Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta who spoke these words:

*Let us ask Our Lady, in a very special way: Mary, mother of Jesus, be a mother to each of us, that we, like you, may be pure in heart, that we, like you, love Jesus; that we, like you, serve the poorest for we are all poor. First let us love our neighbours and so fulfill God's desire that we become carriers of his love and compassion. **Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love***

My sisters continue your good works as members of the League, and in your broader community, so when we meet our Lord face to face, He will say to us, "Well done good and faithful servant ... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35)





# Pearls of Wisdom

OPC Past President

Linda Squarzolo

## *Recognition Awards*

At Mass on the morning that I write this message, the response to the Responsorial Psalm was “The Lord hears the cry of the poor.” How fitting is that when we focus our newsletter on “Mary, Mother of the Poor.” As a League we reach out to people who live with various forms of poverty, the marginalized and less fortunate. Although, as members we all try to help, special members take on leadership roles to organize events or serve in extraordinary ways, above and beyond what most people do. In order to recognize the outstanding efforts and achievements of these special individuals, the National Council established recognition awards.

The **Maple Leaf Service Pin** is given to an outstanding member generally at the **parish level**. A member can receive it for exceptional service for a particular project or for her dedicated service over several years. The nominating council sets the criteria for who receives the award. The nomination process and criteria for awarding the pin should be listed in the council’s Policy and Procedure Document.



The **Bellelle Guerin Award** is given to a member who demonstrates a love for the League through her words and actions but also meets certain criteria. She must have provided extraordinary service to the League and served at both the **parish and diocesan levels**, and possibly at the provincial level. The recipient’s active service for the parish council should include being on the parish executive. She should have been a member for at least 25 years. The recipient of this award is a member who has served faithfully at more than one level but does not qualify for a life membership.

A **Life Membership** is not an award but a commitment by a member who must have served four years at the diocesan level, including as diocesan president, and be a candidate for election as a provincial officer. She must have the ability to participate in research and provide workshops for members.



In Ontario, the nominee must have served in executive positions at diocesan level for a minimum of eight years. *(Years served at diocesan level must include two years as diocesan past president at the time of the anticipated date of presentation. The nominee must have let her name stand for a previous provincial election).*



Councils can develop special awards. In Ontario, the Social Justice Award was established to honour a League member who does outstanding work relating to social justice. Toronto Diocesan Council established the Patricia Beattie Award given to two members who exemplify the Objects of the League, mentor others by sharing their knowledge and actively participate in council meetings, conventions and committees.

There are different ways that special members can be recognized. One parish council gives a “CWL Member of the Year Award”. Perhaps your council wants to develop a new award, unique to parish or diocese. Form a committee of knowledgeable members to decide on how the nominations will be submitted, who will sit on the selection committee and what criteria will be used to judge and choose the award recipient.



When awards are presented, it must be done in a way where everyone agrees that the recipient was truly deserving.

# Minute By Minute

OPC Secretary  
Lisa Henry



## ***May – The Month of Mary Mother of the Poor***

As Catholic women rooted in faith and service, we look to Mary not only as our Mother, but as the Mother of the Poor – the one who teaches us how to see, love, and accompany those most in need. Mary’s life was marked by a quiet attentiveness: she noticed, she responded, and she showed up. Her example mirrors the quiet but essential work of secretaries across our councils, who hold stories, preserve memory, and ensure that no act of service is forgotten.

This year’s national theme, *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission*, calls us to let our work become an expression of discipleship. The work of the secretary is not simply administrative; it is a ministry of witness. When we record the good works of our councils, highlight acts of mercy, or share stories of compassion, we help the League reflect Christ’s love more clearly.



A powerful example of this Marian spirit unfolded recently at a regional CWL meeting. It was shared that, on that very day, one of our members would be attending her mother’s funeral – her mother also a long-standing CWL member.

Without hesitation, Sault Ste. Marie Diocesan President Patricia Clizia paused the meeting so we could enter the church together and surround our sister with love. Over forty members quietly filed in, a simple but profound gesture of solidarity. This is what we do. This is how we show up. This is the beauty of the CWL.

Mary, Mother of the Poor, invites us to notice moments like these – moments of tenderness, unity, and grace. This month, I encourage every secretary to capture one such story in your minutes, newsletters, or parish communications. By lifting up these acts of love, we honour Mary's example and empower His mission in our councils and communities.



YOUR "MISSION" SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT...

### Inspired by Mary, Mother of the Poor



- **Capture one moment of compassion** in your minutes or newsletter – especially something that might otherwise go unrecorded.
  - **Highlight a hidden ministry** or a member whose service is usually behind the scenes.
  - **Preserve stories of solidarity**, like the recent regional gathering where over 40 CWL members paused their meeting to enter the church and support a sister grieving her mother's passing. This is what we do. This is how we show up.
- 
- **Communicate with dignity and tenderness**, reflecting Mary's care for the poor, the grieving, and the overlooked.
  - **Pray before you write**, asking Mary to help you see with her heart and speak with her compassion.

*One small act of intentional communication can honour the poor, strengthen our councils and empower His mission.*

## Mary, Mother of the Poor

*"Let us entrust ourselves to Mary Most Holy, Comforter of the Afflicted and, with her, let us raise a song of hope..."*

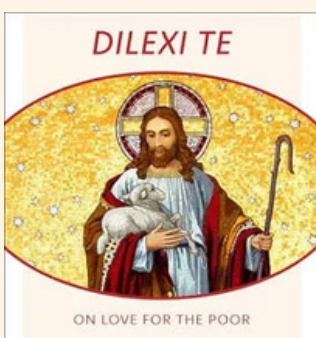
*Pope Leo XIV (2025): In his Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi te*

The month of May, often characterized by the blooming of flowers and the warmth of spring, holds a special place in Catholic tradition as the month dedicated to our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary.



It is a time when we the faithful open our hearts especially to the Mother of God, offering her prayers, flowers, and special devotions. Mary is seen as the spiritual blossom that brought forth the Saviour, Jesus Christ, bringing new life to the world.

Mary is often invoked as the "Mother of the Poor," a title that captures her role as a compassionate advocate for the vulnerable, the marginalized, and the suffering; a title that bridges the gap between divine compassion and the harsh realities of the human condition. She reminds us that true power is found in service and that the greatest honour is bestowed upon those who care for the "least of these."



In his, "Dilexi te" document, Pope Leo XIV highlights Mary's role as a mother who cares for her, "suffering children," and who teaches the church to be, "near to those who suffer".



In 1933 the Blessed Virgin appeared to a young girl named Mariette Beco and identified herself. She pointed to a spring of water and said, "This spring is reserved for all nations... to relieve the sick." Her message is simple but powerful: God has a special love for the poor and those who suffer. Mary calls us to trust in God, to pray, and to show compassion and generosity to those in need.

May is also the month when we celebrate Mother's Day. We honour the women who have given us birth, cared for us, taught us, and nurtured us. Many have lived lives of generous love and service, embodying the "Mother of the Poor" spirit within their own families and communities.

The "Mother of the Poor" title is particularly relevant in our modern world, where poverty takes on many forms—material, spiritual, and social. Mary's maternal love is not distant or exclusive; it is reaching, caring, and protective, embracing all who are struggling. We are reminded of our call to action: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and provide a sanctuary for the weary, especially the most vulnerable. We are invited to recognize the face of Christ in the poor and to respond and serve with courage, humility and care.

*To all CWL members who mother in every form — biological, adoptive, spiritual, or through the simple act of showing up with love — Happy Mother's Day. Your strength, compassion, and unwavering commitment to nurturing others make our community stronger. Today we celebrate every way you give care, guidance, and hope. You are appreciated more than you know.*



# Prayer to Our Lady of the Poor



*O Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Poor,  
You appeared with gentleness and love  
to bring hope to the suffering,  
to comfort the afflicted, and to guide the faithful  
to your Son, Jesus.*

*You know the burdens we carry,  
the sorrows we endure,  
and the wounds that often go unseen.  
Look with compassion upon all who are  
poor in body, broken in heart,  
or weary in spirit.*

*Mother of the Redeemer,  
intercede for us before the throne of God.  
Pour out your motherly grace upon all  
who cry out in need.*

*Shelter us under your mantle of mercy,  
lead us to healing,  
and teach us to trust in Divine Providence.  
May we, inspired by your humility and charity,  
be instruments of love and consolation to others,  
especially the forgotten and the poor.*

*O Lady of the Poor, pray for us.  
That we may walk in hope, live in love,  
and one day rejoice with you  
in the eternal glory of Heaven. Amen.*

*Divine Mercy.org*





# *12 Hours of Prayer For Palliative Care*

**PRESENTED VIRTUALLY BY  
THE ONTARIO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF  
THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA**

**Monday, May 4, 2026 • 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

**A province-wide day of prayer, reflection, and learning**

**Each hour sponsored by a CWL Diocesan Council in Ontario**

**Featuring Adoration • Guest Speakers • Reflection • The Rosary**

**JOIN US ON LINE USING LINK BELOW**

**[HTTPS://US06WEB.ZOOM.US/J/81291731921?PWD=PXRFW8VQM43W1FT88ADHLL4MKAZWOS.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81291731921?pwd=PXRFW8VQM43W1FT88ADHLL4MKAZWOS.1)**

**Closing Mass – 7:00 p.m.**

**Live-streamed Mass celebrated by**

**Bishop Alan Campeau**

**Provincial Spiritual Advisor**



## ***Mary, Mother of the Poor and Marginalized***

*“God has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
God has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty”  
Luke 1:52-53*

Mary has many titles. It is as the Mother of the Poor that we can understand her as a companion to the marginalized and a role model for us.

In her Magnificat, she proclaims that God lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry. This is a message of justice that has been considered so radical it was once banned or suppressed by authoritarian regimes. In India (under British Rule) its public singing or reading was prohibited in some churches by British authorities during the era of the British Raj. On the final day of British Rule in 1947, Mahatma Gandhi (who was not Christian) requested that it be read in all places where the British flag was being lowered. It was also outlawed in Guatemala in the 1980s and in Argentina (1976-1983) particularly after the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo wrote the words on banners for their protests against the “disappeared”.



In the fall of 1979, the Catholic Women’s League of Canada, in conjunction with Development and Peace launched a national campaign to assist the grandmothers in their search for the disappeared children. During the summer of 1983, two of the grandmothers, were invited to attend the CWL national convention in Saskatoon. The symbolic white handkerchief worn by the mothers and grandmothers, with the name of their missing relative written on it, was hung on the wall.



That same year, CWL National President Jean Mahoney was invited by the Group for the Defense of Civil Rights in Argentina and the grandmothers to visit Argentina. She had the opportunity to experience the relentless work of the grandmothers. You can read more on this journey of solidarity in this link (pages 7-9) [https://devp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/m1.9\\_active-citizenship-asst\\_V2.pdf](https://devp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/m1.9_active-citizenship-asst_V2.pdf)

The Grandmothers are still searching for the lost children. For more information on the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, go to [www.abuelas.org.ar](http://www.abuelas.org.ar). You will need to click on the translate button.

The women of the League continue to walk in solidarity with oppressed peoples. The March for Life, the Coldest Night of the Year, letters to government all demonstrate the League's relentless support of the marginalized. God does not only do great things for her, but dreams of great things for all who are marginalized and forgotten. We, sisters of the League, are his handmaidens and holy is His name.



**Maria Isabel (Chicha) Mariani (second from right) and Estella Carlotto (left), president and vice-president of the grandmothers, were invited to attend the 1983 CWL National Convention in Saskatoon. On the wall of the meeting room they hung white kerchiefs that symbolized their missing grandchildren.**

# SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hilarion Mitchell

***He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.***

*Luke 1:52-53*

Mary Mother of God and the Mother of the Poor lived a life of simplicity and humility. She is seen as a model of care for those who are poor, vulnerable, and marginalized.



In the Magnificat Prayer (Luke 1: 46-55), she praises God for lifting the lowly and filling the hungry with good things, while sending the rich away empty. It is an awareness of social inequality and belief that God cares deeply for those who are overlooked or oppressed. This aligns with the broader message of Jesus, who also cared for the poor and marginalized.

Her life was marked by hardship and uncertainty; giving birth to Jesus under humble conditions. She is the gentle and caring mother who listens to the cries of those in distress. She is a symbol of hope where poverty and hardship are reality. Mary's many titles include, Mother most admirable, good counsel, most merciful, mirror of justice, queen of peace and more.

Mary is witnessed through social justice as she is a symbol of resistance, dignity, and transformative justice, standing with the poor, amplifying their voice for a more just society. She stands in solidarity with the marginalized, speaks against injustice, human dignity, and calls for a more equitable world.

Like Mary, we help those less fortunate Blessed are the Poor through our theme, *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission* by any of the actions below.

- Service to the vulnerable: Support shelters, food banks, and outreach programs, underserved communities. Collect diapers, baby formula and baby clothing for mothers in crisis or pregnancy centres.
- Advocacy: Fair wages, defend migrants and refugees, challenge unjust systems.  
May 21: World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
- Accompaniment: Walks with those suffering  
May 2–6: 2026 National Hospice Palliative Care Week  
May 14: National March for Life  
Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care
- Dignity-centered care: dignity of every person, anti-poverty programs, Indigenous solidarity work, anti-human trafficking efforts  
2019.01 Canada to Honour its Commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child  
2017.01 Full Implementation of the Supreme Court Decision in R. v. Gladue for Indigenous Offenders

May 5: Red Dress Day: This will be the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People (MMIWG2S+), also known as Red Dress Day. It serves as a powerful reminder of the ongoing violence faced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Canada.



Laudato Si' Week (May 17 – 24): The Hope in Action theme it is an invitation to move from reflection to transformation by turning hope into concrete action for our common home.

- Host a prayer service or dialogue on Care for Our Common Home
- Reduce energy use at home and at the parish
- Review purchasing practices

## Ontario Provincial Council Government Visit April 23, 2026



Resolved, that the Ontario Provincial CWL Council met with Ontario Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and staff on Thursday April 23, 2026, at Queen's Park for the purpose of presenting resolutions directed to the provincial government.

Resolved, that Colleen Martin, President; Hilarion Mitchell, Social Justice Chair; Karen McDonald, Vice President; Linda Squarzolo, Past President; Lisa Henry, Secretary and Sue Lubowitz, Service Chair were the OPC delegates.

Resolved, that the day began in the Legislative Assembly, where the OPC delegates were formally introduced as guests in the gallery before Question Period by the Honourable Charmaine Williams, Brampton Centre, Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Resolved, that around 40 MPPs and staff attended the non-partisan luncheon to engage in dialogue on the League resolutions that may have been partially or still needs to be implemented.

- ON.24.01 Elimination of the Mature Minor Doctrine in Mental Health  
ON.23.01 To Establish a Sustained Universal Intermittent Catheter Coverage  
ON.22.01 Improve Care in Long-term Care Homes  
ON.19.01 Psychotherapy Pilot Project for Adults  
ON.19.02 Abortion and the Effects on Mental Health  
ON.19.03 Long Term Care Beds in Ontario  
ON.15.04 Provision of Regulated Housing for the Chronic, Severely Mentally Ill  
ON.11.01 Safe, Potable Water for First Nations Communities  
ON.10.02 Financial Assistance for Diabetes Supplies  
ON.03.04 Widening of Highway 69

Resolved, that the MPPs expressed appreciation for the League's engagement and the opportunity to connect directly with delegates.

Resolved, that the visit highlighted the League's ongoing commitment to bringing a faith-rooted, hope-filled voice that reflect the concerns of Canadian women, families, and communities, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable.



# Communications Tip:

## Protecting Your Council from “Sold Out” Event Scams



As more CWL councils and parishes promote events on Facebook, a new type of online scam has been targeting organizers—especially when an event fills up quickly. The moment someone posts that an event is **“sold out,”** scammers use automated bots to swoop in and reply with comments like “I have extra tickets available—message me!” **These offers are not real.** Their goal is simple: to scam people out of their money

### Why This Happens

Scammers program bots to search Facebook for keywords such as sold out, tickets, limited spots, or registration closed. When they find a match, the bot immediately comments—sometimes several times—pretending to be a real person trying to “sell” their spot. These accounts are designed to look trustworthy, which is why they catch people off guard.

### How to Spot a Bot

Although each fake account looks slightly different, most share common warning signs:

- **Instant replies** — multiple comments appear within seconds of your post going live.
- **Profiles that look legitimate at first glance** — they may have a profile photo, banner image, and posts that seem normal.
- **Thousands of followers** — far more than a typical parishioner or CWL member.
- **Christian or faith-based imagery** — scammers often use crosses, Bible verses, or church-related photos to appear credible.
- **No connection to your community** — they are not members of your parish, your council, or your region.





If you click into the profile, you'll often notice generic posts, repeated content, or activity that doesn't match a real person's life.

### **How to Prevent the Scam**

The easiest and most effective solution is to avoid typing the words "sold out" in the text of your post. Instead:

- Create a simple JPEG graphic that says Sold Out and upload it as the image for your post. Bots cannot read text inside an image.
- Use alternative wording in the caption, such as: "Registration for this event is now closed. Thank you for your support!"
- Turn off comments on the post if you want an extra layer of protection.
- Pin an official comment stating that no ticket resales are permitted and that any offers in the comments should be ignored.
- Report and delete scam comments as soon as they appear.

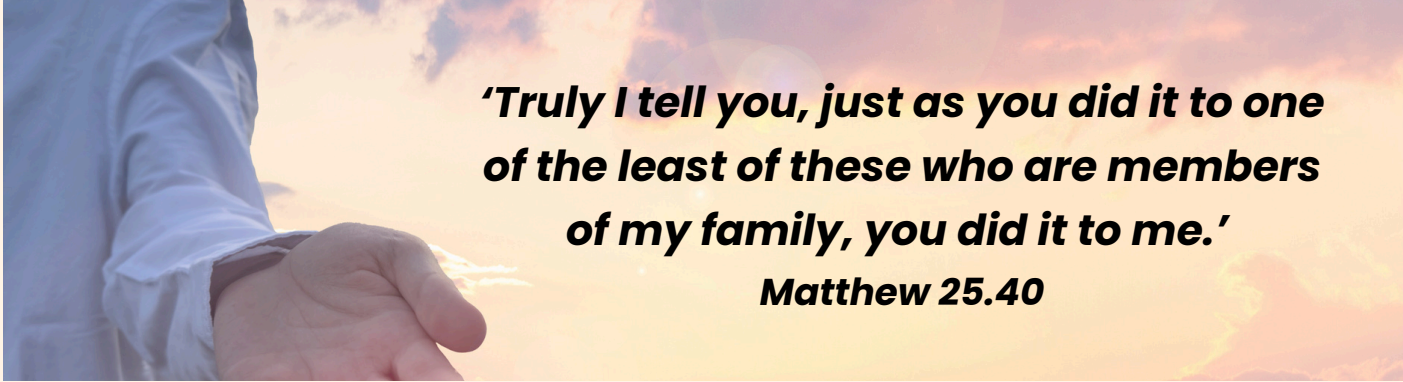


### **Why This Matters**

Your councils work hard to host meaningful, faith-filled events. Protecting members and parishioners from online scams is part of good stewardship and good communication. A few small adjustments can keep your posts safe, clear, and trustworthy.

***Please share this information  
with your councils  
so everyone can stay  
protected online!***





***'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'***

***Matthew 25.40***

***Do you ever think to yourself,*** I don't have the means to help the poor as much as I would like to. I thought this too and this past Christmas Season made me change my mind. One very cold night I was walking into a shopping mall and there was a gentleman sitting on the bench drawing in his notebook. After having a conversation with him, he thanked me for talking to him. That was all he wanted, he didn't ask for money and told me he would go to the shelter to sleep. On another occasion, I approached another person living rough and was reaching into my wallet to give him some money. He told me, he was fine and didn't need any money. He just wanted to talk. Both times I asked what their names were during our conversations and when I left them, I told them I would pray for them. Both thanked me and their parting words were "God bless you". How is it that both of these men made me feel better because of these interactions?



This month of Mary and reflecting on Mary as the Mother of the Poor, is an opportunity to reach out. Be brave, reach out to someone living rough and have a conversation. Sometimes to be seen and listened to is enough. Ask their name and tell them you will pray for them. As St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love".

**Submitted by Wilma Vanderzwaag  
OPC Administrative Assistant**

# Beyond the Bake Sale:

Fresh recipes for Council Fun and Growth

## ***A RETREAT THAT IGNITED HEARTS AND DEEPENED MISSION***



The London Diocesan CWL offered its members far more than an event on February 21 – it offered a true encounter with Christ and with one another. President Stefanie Hammond of St. Michael, Bright’s Grove, shared how 102 women gathered at Precious Blood Parish, Exeter, for a Lenten Retreat that blended prayer, learning, and heartfelt community in a way that reflects the very best of CWL engagement.

The day opened with Mass celebrated by Fr. Tony Laforet, grounding participants in the grace of the Lenten season. Dr. Bernardine Ketelaars then led a rich exploration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, tracing its history from the early Church to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Her message was clear: devotion to the Sacred Heart is not a relic of the past but a living source of mercy, tenderness, and steadfast love for every soul. Bernardine reminded members that the promises of the Sacred Heart are not guarantees of ease but assurances of God’s faithful presence – grace in every state of life, peace in our homes, and comfort in trials. Practices such as contrition, Eucharistic devotion, and reconciliation help us stay rooted in that presence.





In the afternoon, reflection turned into mission. Through a guided Visio Divina using the new CWL logo, members prayed with the symbols of Christ's burning love, the Spirit's fire, and the call to serve. Bernardine connected this devotion directly to our national theme, *Ignite Your Passion, Empower His Mission*, challenging members to see the poor with dignity and to let compassion shape every encounter.

In a world hungry for hope, the London Diocesan retreat showed what happens when Catholic women gather not just to learn, but to be transformed. This is the heart of our national theme: allowing Christ's love to set our hearts ablaze so our service becomes more than activity – it becomes witness. When councils offer experiences like this retreat, they form women who pray deeply, see clearly, and serve boldly. And when our hearts burn with the fire of the Sacred Heart, the League becomes exactly what the Church needs today: a living sign of mercy, a community that sees the unseen, and a sisterhood ready to carry Christ's love to every corner of our province.

**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/](http://cwl.on.ca/conventions/)