

The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Manitoba Provincial Council



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

DATE: September 2017

Communique #1

Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God's Call

TO: Diocesan Presidents (for information and forwarding to Parish Councils)
Diocesan Chairpersons of Spiritual Development
CC: Provincial Executive (for information)
CC: National Chairperson of Spiritual Development (for information)
FROM: Mary-Margaret Patterson, Provincial Chairperson of Spiritual Development

SAT SREE AKAAL, BLESSINGS, PAX PAIX, SALAM, SHALOM, NAMESTE, KAMUSTA

My name is Mary-Margaret Patterson and I am the new Provincial Spiritual Development Chairperson for the term 2017-2019. For those of you who may not know me, I am a 36-year member coming out of the Military Ordinariate world before settling in Winnipeg 25 years ago. I have served at parish level in 4 provinces and as President 3 times in 2 different provinces. I have also served on 2 different provincial councils but only on 1 Diocesan council – Winnipeg. I am a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish in Charleswood and a Life Member of the Winnipeg Diocese. I have served as Spiritual Development Chairperson at parish and diocesan level and assisted at national level. I am ready to be called upon by any diocese to assist in any way that I can.

These next few months are rich with days of celebration and remembrance, especially for our Blessed Mother. Try to incorporate some special intentions and/or commemoration into your meetings and gatherings keeping these dates in mind:

September 8 – birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

September 12 – Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary

September 15 – Our Lady of Sorrows

September 24 – Our Lady of Mercy

Of course, the entire month of October is dedicated to the Most Holy Rosary.

Did you read the words at the top of this communiqué? All of these greetings have the same intent and basic meaning. They are a gesture of respect to the people who come from the cultural background to which the greetings apply. These are words we are somewhat familiar with - some more than others. Why not set a small goal for yourselves to learn what they are, when they are used, and educate your council members on them? Our world is changing around us and it is our Christian Catholic responsibility to embrace the changes in whatever way we can.

What is happening in your diocese/parish in regards to Adult Faith Formation? Do you have anyone involved in the Nathanael Experience? Maybe some of them could speak at a meeting or gathering. Do you have an organized Bible Study program? Is it co-ed or women only? Would one work

better than the other in your parish? Check it out. If so, encourage involvement. If not, perhaps you could start one. It does not mean that you have to facilitate if that is not your strength but you could help get one started. Speak to your Spiritual Advisor for input and advice.

Are you living a “Life of Gratitude”? One of our speakers at the National Convention in PE was Ken Yasinski. Some of you might remember him from his ‘Face 2 Face’ youth retreats. He spoke most eloquently about altering our mindsets by consciously speaking/thinking of what we have to grateful for everyday. This is not about being grateful that we are not someone else who has troubles. It is about being grateful for what/who we are – alive, a family member, a friend, a child of God, etc. – and for what God has done for you and for where Jesus is in your life, regardless of what that might mean. The more we consciously do this, the more our subconscious will automatically look at life in the same manner and the abundant blessings of the Lord will be more apparent.

I am very grateful to be at this place in my life and to be able to share my personal spirituality with you. Remember: Spirituality is the expression of your relationship with Jesus. There are as many different means of expression as there are personalities. Try to incorporate different methods of expression into your gatherings. Open yourself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is amazing where you can go when you do!

May our Lady of Good Counsel guide and bless you.

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SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

DATE November 2017

Communique #2

Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God's Call

TO: Diocesan Presidents (for information and forwarding to Parish Councils)
Diocesan Chairpersons of Spiritual Development
CC: Provincial Executive (for information)
CC: National Chairperson of Spiritual Development (for information)
FROM: Mary-Margaret Patterson, Provincial Chairperson of Spiritual Development

*Marian dates to remember: December 8 – Feast of the Immaculate Conception
December 12 – Feast of Our Lady of Guadeloupe*

The beautiful fall is quickly passing by and winter will soon be upon us. The weather patterns are as quixotic as usual but I do not think that many of us have anything to complain about yet. As with the changing of Nature's seasons, there are upcoming changes to the Liturgical seasons.

Advent is fast approaching and with it a time of reflection, repentance, and reparation as we prepare our inner selves for the ongoing celebration of the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven of Jesus, the Christ. Take time to give yourself the gift of prayer and meditation by attending the many parish missions and special presentations that are being offered all around you. It doesn't matter if they are in another parish or community or diocese. They are all signs of Jesus reaching out to you to get to know Him better by getting to know yourself better. Remember: this is a two-way relationship and needs to be nurtured as much as any other one in your life. This also helps us to maintain an *attitude of gratitude* in our daily lives.

Advent and Christmas have a symbiotic relationship and all too often they overlap. Keeping the commercial Christmas away from Advent and maintaining the liturgical Christmas season from Christmas Eve until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord can be challenging. Preparing your heart and soul for the coming of our Saviour and preparing your home for the seasonal festivities are part and parcel of the same thing. Each has its place and importance and only you can decide which part is going to take precedence in your life and the lives of your loved ones. You decide how commercial or not your Christmas will be. You decide how to incorporate the true meaning of Advent and Christmas into the next few months. Stay strong and faithful.

This communiqué is a bit later than I had planned for it to be. I thought it was my own procrastination until I received a message on my Facebook; then I realized that the Holy Spirit has something else for me to include. We hear a lot of rhetoric about the use of the letter 'X' in Christmas – which, by the way, was

the symbol for Christ throughout history – and the commercialization of Christmas. Here are some words to ponder.

Want to keep Christ in Christmas?

Feed the hungry

Clothe the naked

Forgive the guilty

Welcome the stranger and unwanted child

Care for the ill

Love your enemies

I wish all of you and your families a wonderfully fulfilling and blessed time of celebration during the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

May Our Lady of Good Counsel bless and sustain you.



The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Manitoba Provincial Council



SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

DATE: March 9, 2018

Communique #3

Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God's Call

TO: Diocesan Presidents (for information and forwarding to Parish Councils)
Diocesan Chairpersons of Spiritual Development
CC: Provincial Executive (for information)
CC: National Chairperson of Spiritual Development (for information)
FROM: Mary-Margaret Patterson, Provincial Chairperson of Spiritual Development

Here we are – half way through Lent and 2/3 of the way through winter. Let's keep the journey through both as fulfilling and awe-struck as we can. The journey helps make the anticipated destination even more wonderful.

To paraphrase what my National counterpart, Jacqueline Nogier, so eloquently stated in the winter issue of The Canadian League, Being Present enhances our life, our surroundings, and our journey to a closer relationship with Jesus. This in turn enhances the lives of everyone around us. More and more we become 'Living Prayer'.

Part of Lenten practice is fasting from something in our lives. As kids, we were encouraged to give up candy and as adults we were encouraged to give up sweets of all kinds. Many of us got so caught up in the outward signs of fasting that we lost sight of what was the most important fasting we are supposed to do. Fast from that which is keeping us from getting closer to what Jesus meant for us to be and become. Fast from the bitterness/resentment that might be in your heart. Fast from the impulse to lie about anything. Fast from the petty thoughts and feelings you might be having about your family and neighbours. Fast from the desire to over-indulge in something at the cost of someone else. There are many things we can fast from that will bring us nearer to a close relationship with God that have nothing to do with what other people see us doing.

Instead of how or what we fast from, our almsgiving should be about how we live our lives. Money is always an important part of Lenten almsgiving but is only a small part. Almsgiving also includes giving of our time and presence to others that need it. To paraphrase "whatever you do to the least of these, you do unto me". Reading to a group of kids in day care, individually to a shut-in, donating to a food bank, visiting a seniors' center; these are all ways of almsgiving. If you are doing some of these already, be aware of the blessing that is being given and received.

Another way is to go through the things in your life that are no longer needed by you. Could others make use of them? Donate them to a worthwhile charity or organization that can distribute the items to those who need them the most. I read about a practice for Lent a few years ago that I try to accomplish each year. 40 days/40 items is what it boils down to. It could be clothes, coats, household items, furniture –

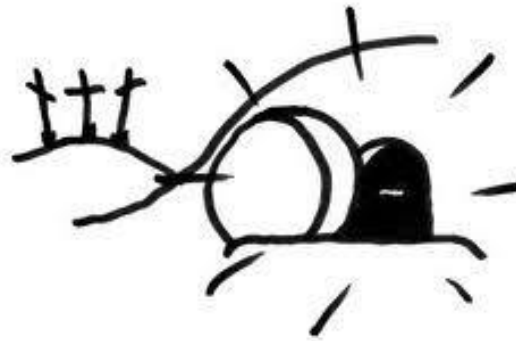
whatever is cluttering up your life and could be used by someone else. Getting rid of **things** can help free up space in your life for other things.

One of the other things that could use some of the space is an increase in your prayer life. One of my favourite ways to pray is by singing hymns and other beautiful music. The beauty of the notes and words and the realization that God created those things and gave the ability to someone to put them together is a truly wondrous experience not to be taken lightly. It can be sheer joy and a sense of communion with the Almighty.

Another special method is Lectio Divina, also known as ‘divine/ sacred reading’ which is the practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word and how it speaks to you. I use what is known as the book of Shorter Christian Prayer which is like the Breviary used by priests and monks. Another good source is booklets like ‘The Upper Room’ and ‘Our Daily Bread’ or the Little Black Book. There are also web sites such as The Word Among Us (wau.org) and 3 Minute Retreats (loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer).

Following any of these Lenten practices can help us to focus our vision on our journey to a closer, personal relationship with the Trinity. By getting rid of the unnecessary and replacing it with actual steps for our journey, we can better arrive at the glory of Easter and the Risen Lord with a fuller and richer heart, mind, and soul.

May Our Lady of Good Counsel keep and guide you today and always.



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DATE October 2018

Communique #4

Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God's Call

TO: Diocesan Presidents (for information and forwarding to Parish Councils)
Diocesan Chairpersons of Spiritual Development
CC: Provincial Executive (for information)
CC: National Chairperson of Spiritual Development (for information)
FROM: Mary-Margaret Patterson, Provincial Chairperson of Spiritual Development

It has been a long time since I corresponded with you in this fashion. Many of you I have spoken to in person or by email in the past few months but it is time to send out the same message to everybody.

We have had enriching and rewarding conventions this past year culminating in the crown jewel, the 2018 National Convention. You are all to be commended in your efforts for any part you played in any of these events. Without you, they would not have been the successes that they were.

As many of you are aware, Pope Francis has been very active with visits to countries, letters to the faithful, and meetings with concerned groups – especially youth. What has come out of these activities has been a pretty consistent message, regardless of the issue. During his September visit to the Balkans, while in Estonia, he reminded us that “love is not dead. It calls us and leads us forth.” as he was speaking to the ecumenical youth congress who were there. He also exhorted us to “not become slaves of consumerism” which is a real danger in the first world countries as well as in the development of third world countries.

The issues of the Universal Church as regards to sexual abuse by clergy demands and calls for deep, devotional prayer for both the victims and the abusers. It is not a time to abandon the Church or question why you still remain. As Bishop Robert Barron says “now is the time to fight **for** the Catholic Church...because of Jesus the Christ, Blessed Virgin Mary, the Eucharist, and the Saints...because they are all worth it.” The Old and New Testaments both call us to pray for the victims of the sins and the sinners themselves.

I have attached a very appropriate prayer that was shared by our Provincial Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Paul Bringleston, called ‘A Prayer for Angry Catholics’. This was first shared with me by Winnipeg Diocesan Spiritual Development Chairperson, Colleen Zaluski. I used it at a Provincial Executive meeting and it bears repeating.

As we move into two of our more busy liturgical seasons, we need to keep in mind that ‘Keeping Christ in Christmas’ is more than a slogan. We must make ourselves Christ to everyone we meet as we go about our daily routines. Smile at people, whether you know them or not, as you pass each other. Carry a couple of granola bars or small bags of nuts to hand out to any homeless who you might meet. Pay for the coffee of

the person behind you in line. Round up the old coats and boots that you don't need any more and take them to a shelter for redistribution. Be kind to each other especially if you are not feeling particularly kind at the moment. Give to others what you would like to receive. That is how we keep Christ present in the world.

A few resources for you to enrich your spiritual programs for your meetings are the many websites that are available to us with sound Catholic material with which to work. Some of them I mentioned in my March communiqué but they bear repeating, such as *The Word Among Us* (wau.org) and *3 Minute Retreats* (loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer). A Vatican news site is zenit.org/English. Another good source is booklets like 'The Upper Room' and 'Our Daily Bread' or the *Little Blue Book for Advent*. The websites are available for your computer and/or your smart phone as you desire.

I am, as always, available to you for anything that you might need to enrich your Councils' spiritual lives. I am just a phone call, email, or text away. It is my great pleasure and honour to help you in any way that I can.