

99th Annual CWL National Convention: Highlights – Calgary August 18-21, 2019

Submitted by Mary Hunt, President-Elect

“Our home is in common and includes the supernatural environment of the church. The League is an expression of that common home, based on faith, hope and charity. Implementation of new steps in the League is an opportunity to work together, building a common home where we find friendship and cooperate to make God’s home”.

Bishop Stephen Jensen

Calgary hosted 846 delegates, Spiritual Advisors and guests at the 99th Annual CWL National Convention from August 18-21, 2019. Participants were treated to the warmth of western hospitality at its very best as Calgary shared the things that make it a wonderful destination to visit and a great place to raise a family. The loving attention to details by our Calgary CWL League Sisters was evident throughout.

On Sunday morning, the sun shone bright as delegates had the choice of two tours at either the National Music Centre or Heritage Park. It was difficult to choose which to attend and both groups seemed equally pleased with the tour they had chosen.

The Resolutions Dialogue was held on the Sunday afternoon providing us with the opportunity to discuss with our CWL Sisters from across the county the resolutions that would come to the business meeting. The room was filled with the voices of women sharing their views about the resolutions under consideration.

In the evening we travelled to the beautiful St. Albert the Great Parish for the Opening Eucharistic Celebration, Opening Ceremonies and Reception. The flag procession was determined by order of entry into Confederation. Alberta Mackenzie processed in two flags; Alberta and the NWT. I was honored to process in the NWT flag which served as a poignant reminder to me of the collective vibrancy of the faith filled women with whom we share such a special bond. Ann-Marie Gorman declared the convention open and immediately following we gathered for a reception which was punctuated by the happy sounds of voices eagerly anticipating the days ahead.

The next morning, **Monday**, began with a celebration of the Eucharist followed by a welcome by Ann-Marie and a special Calgary Airport White Hatters Ceremony where each member of the National Executive was presented with a white hat of their own. Greetings were brought to the assembly by representatives from the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Society, the United Church Women, the Ukrainian Catholic Women’s League of Canada, the Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada and a letter was read from the WUCWO President General.

Then onto business with the presentation of the agenda, minutes, roll call etc. followed by reports from the Military Ordinariate and the Provincial Presidents that were well crafted and interesting to hear. Judy Look prepared an excellent report that was accompanied by a slide presentation highlighting Alberta Mackenzie. We were informed that all the reports will appear in the fall edition of the *Canadian League Magazine*.

The assembly approved sending a letter to the CCB commending them for their document *Protecting Minors against Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation*.

Resolution 2019.01 was presented and passed under the Christian Family Standing Committee which urges the federal government “to honour its legal commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by providing legal protection to children before birth.”

Alex Schadenberg, Executive Director of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition thanked the CWL for our ongoing support and reminded us that they do accept airmiles donations. The EPC was presented with a cheque for \$18,235.52.

The afternoon concluded with the uplifting commissioning of eleven new life members...this year there were no candidates from Alberta Mackenzie.

In the evening there was a Western Shindig that was Calgary Stampede approved. Members clad in western wear and cowboy hats eagerly got up to learn how to line dance to the delight of everyone...Archbishop Pettipas looked on with a broad smile of amusement and pleasure on his face but claimed he could not dance when some of our members tried to

coax him onto the dance floor. There were great photo ops that had cell phone cameras snapping pictures throughout the evening.

After the night's festivities, **Tuesday** morning arrived sooner than expected and began again with a beautiful liturgy followed by four break-out sessions. Thank you to Clover Oryshak for her notes for Sessions 2 & 3.

1) Living Laudato Si: Practical Tools on How We can Care for our Common Home. Presenter, Dr. Peter Baltutis from St. Mary's University focused on three steps to effective Social Justice:

1. *SEE: Look in detail at the situation*
2. *JUDGE: Analyze in light of the Gospel*
3. *ACT: Suggest appropriate action to be taken by the church and/or society.*

2) Spiritual Practice and Care for our Common Home Presented by Sister Madeleine Gregg

Sister Madeleine reminded everyone that scripture is for us today and that we are eternal. Darkness is not our destiny as God created us in the light (Genesis)..we have "light of faith", "light of reason", "to be a light to others". She suggested some spiritual practices for us to embrace:

1. Become readers of scripture and pray. 2. We need to believe that love is at the heart of all creation 3. We need to see life as the first of God's gifts. 4. Practice "3 Pit Stops" everyday: First thing in the morning remind yourself what you want to do that day. Midday reflect on the day so far; if needed, re-point yourself towards the Holy. At the end of the day, reflect on how the day went. 5. Be engaged in your faith. 6. Always look for opportunities to love and serve. 7. Attend weekly Mass and rest on the Sabbath 8. Go to reconciliation and adoration monthly 9. Make a yearly pilgrimage to somewhere such as Skaro or Our Lady of the Rockies.

3) What the Catholic Church says about Care for Creation and why it is Fundamentally Catholic that we are "good stewards" of the environment. Presented by Dr. Timothy Harvie

Discussed the importance of relationships with each other, with the Earth and with institutions and structures. Also spoke about the economy and relationships; the economy is a tool to help people live, arrange3s how society conducts itself and how people relate to each other through goods and services. Three relationships were emphasized: 1. Our relationship with God – thru prayer 2. Our relationship with others thru economics 3. Our relationship with Creation – thru ecology. Dr. Harvie argued that the world is finite and has limits which means that we cannot grow the economy or consume forever; this would be unsustainable...it is possible to have a high GDP but citizens who are starving or lacking clean drinking water. "The Catholic Church continues to teach us about the importance of:

- Mutual good & every individual sharing in resources (Pope John Paul 11)
- Duties arising from our relationship with the natural environment (Pope Benedict XVI)
- Caring for Creation as central to our Catholic faith and God as the Creator (Pope Francis)

In closing, Dr. Harvie emphasized the need for consumption to slow down and for us to ask more relational questions such as: who benefits? And what type of relationship is being nurtured?

4) A Carbon Conversation: Why is it So Hard to Change? How Can we respond to the Cry of the Poor? Presented by Marilou LeGeyt

We were provided with an overview of why generationally we find it hard to change our ways regarding waste and consumption. It was surprising to learn that in North America one third of the food we purchase is thrown out and wasted. Simply by reducing/eliminating food wastage, collectively we can have an enormous impact on the carbon footprint aside from oil, gas and coal consumption.

Our keynote speaker for the convention, Sr. Dorothy Ederer, a Dominican Sister from Grand Rapids, Michigan delivered an emotional and entertaining address titled "*What is our common home? We care for our homeland, our homes, our hearts*". Sr. Dorothy touched our hearts with her personal stories and was very well received. She is a prolific author with many titles to her credit which are readily available for purchase on the internet. You will find her presentation on the League website and it can be shared with your councils.

That evening, over 300 enthusiastic Alberta Mackenzie delegates and their guests gathered in the main ballroom of the Hyatt for the provincial dinner which proved to be another fun evening of good food, good music and comradery. We had the special opportunity to thank the wonderful organizing committee for their dedication and hard work in planning

and hosting the convention...kudos to all!!! Special thanks to Jan Myre and Janet MacPhee for organizing the evening as it usually falls under the purview of the President-Elect...I really do owe you big time, ladies!

Wednesday, the final day we were treated to an excellent presentation about year one of the Strategic Plan by Fran Lucas, National President-Elect and Chairperson of Organization which began with a creative video presentation featuring the soundtrack theme from *Star Wars* accompanied by the opening lines scrolling into the future. The presentation will be made available to provincial presidents.

Donations distributed under standing committees were as follows:

Catholic Missions in Canada (CIMC)	\$38,160.20
Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA)	\$16,346.13
Coady International Institute	\$23,991.44 (for participants in the Global Change Leaders Program)

Fr. David Reilander from CMIC reminded us that Canada is a mission country, especially in the north where the Church is a vital presence. A motion was passed to ***Declare a National Day of Prayer for Canadian Home Missions.***

Resolution 2019.02 Canadian Support for the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted which “urges the federal government to support, sign and ratify the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons”.

The Closing Eucharistic Celebration was held at St. Mary’s Cathedral nestled at the edge of Calgary’s downtown core. It included the reaffirmation of officers and the flag recession. The gala banquet was memorable with a delicious Alberta Beef meal and entertainment by a talented acapella quartet that parodied the lyrics of the song *Sweet Caroline* to make it a CWL song. The *Heebee-Jeebees* pleased the crowd with many familiar songs and to the delight of all included Bishop Jensen as a “fifth member” for a rendition of *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*. The Bishop’s good-natured participation endeared him to all present.

And, so ended a most enjoyable and memorable 99th National Convention of the Catholic Women’s League of Canada with a warm and enthusiastic invitation to attend **Our 100th National Convention in Montreal in August of 2020.**

Report on Spirituals submitted by Annamaria Matsui – Accredited Delegate

The theme, “Care For Our Common Home” permeated the entire convention. Care for our Common Home encompasses the earth, all creation and mankind.

The opening Mass was held on Sunday evening August 19th hosted by St Albert the Great Parish in South East Calgary.

The celebration began with a procession of provincial, territorial, Catholic Women’s League and Canada flags which joined the Papal Flag in the sanctuary– Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and Deacons followed.

Convention Choir opened with the hymn Laudato Si (Praise Be to You) that set the tone for the entire convention. It is based on Pope Francis’ 2nd encyclical of the same name. Monday and Tuesday, we were most blessed to celebrate the Eucharist on the convention floor at the Hyatt Hotel before the sessions– A designated prayer room, which included the Exposition of Blessed Sacrament, was set up in a quiet space on the same floor as the convention to give delegates an opportunity for quiet reflection and pray.

Wednesday’s closing Eucharistic Celebration at St. Mary’s Cathedral continued the theme in their choice of music and the Bishop’s homily and brought the convention full circle with singing of the hymn Laudato Si

Monday’s afternoon opening prayer Come, Walk on the Water With Me was followed by a beautiful Visual Musical on Screen: Hillsong United, “Oceans (Where Feet May Fail).” YouTube, <https://youtube/FBJJkiRukY>

Tuesday’s afternoon opening prayer Let All Creatures Praise the Lord was adapted from the Canticle Week 1 Shorter Christian Prayer. The Memorial Service for our deceased members and spiritual advisors was the closing prayer for the afternoon session. Many of us were remembering specific members who have passed this past year; as well as those who have been gone for many years but are still in our memory and our hearts.

Our closing Wednesday afternoon prayer was titled Care for Our Common Home and summed up our entire convention. I’m sure all delegates will be drawn to read or re-read Pope Francis’ Encyclical after experiencing the beautiful and inspiring spirituals at this year’s convention.