

ORAL REPORTS

The following abbreviated oral reports were given at the 86th annual national convention in Halifax, Nova Scotia. They have been edited for spacing purposes. Full versions may be obtained from the League website at www.cwl.ca or by contacting national office.

PRESIDENT



Agnes Bedard

Being national president of The Catholic Women's League of Canada is the best job in the whole world! I'd like to share the story of my journey over the past months.

In February, I flew to Ottawa to attend the Foreign Affairs Canada Non-Governmental Organizations Human Rights Consultations along with National President-elect Lorette Noble, National Chairperson of Community Life Ann Doucet and life members Anida Simurda and Diane Curley. We heard stories of our companions who live the reality of human rights abuses. Foreign affairs workers spoke of poverty, of people without access to water, health care, education or shelter, of people living with AIDS, especially grandmothers looking after their grandchildren, and of the horrors of war. We heard the stories of the voiceless – those who live in constant fear. When we hear of people living without such basic human rights, we are nudged to discern what we can do to help. We must not forget and we must not do nothing.

My next trip took me to visit St. Margaret Mary Parish Council in Hamilton, Ontario, where I awarded a certificate to the council for having the largest increase in membership over the prior year.

After a brief visit at home with my husband, I flew to Winnipeg to participate in Manitoba Provincial Council's Annual Day of Celebration, attend a Military Ordinariate parish council meeting and then chair the winter meeting of the national executive.

After returning home I drove to Westlock, north of Edmonton, where I attended a parish council 50th anniversary celebration and facilitated a workshop. From there, it was on to Edmonton, where I attended the Edmonton Archdiocesan Council banquet and found out more about the Bizarre Women and CART (Communication Access Real-Time Translation). I then drove to Saskatchewan for the Saskatoon diocesan convention where I facilitated a workshop and inadvertently returned home without my national president's pin.

I missed my flight to Toronto by one day – Ontario

Provincial President Shirley George patiently waited at the airport for six hours (on the correct day), hoping I would show up. I arrived in Toronto a day after my scheduled workshop at the Peterborough diocesan convention, but I rented a car and hustled to Parry Sound, arriving just in time for the banquet.

I then went to New Brunswick for the Saint John archdiocesan convention. This time, it was my nightgown that got left behind. I presented a workshop on *companions on the journey* and was the grateful recipient of loaner pajamas from a member who just happened to have a spare. From there, I travelled to Fredericton, where I enjoyed supper with a parish council. After replacing my broken suitcase, I was off to Ottawa to meet with federal government representatives. After a misadventure at the hotel, National President-elect Lorette Noble, National Legislation Chairperson Danielle McNeil-Hessian, National Resolutions Chairperson Dr. Rayleen De Luca, Executive Director Kim Scammell and I changed hotels and prepared for our meetings. After five days in Ottawa, I returned home to Calgary. Briefly.

I travelled to Dorval where I attended the Quebec provincial convention. I presented a workshop on *companions on the journey* and membership. From there, I flew to Washington, DC, to attend the WUCWO General Assembly. There, I met sisters from 44 countries. We shared our stories, participated in wonderful Eucharistic celebrations, enjoyed African singers and Korean liturgical dance and heard horrendous stories of abuse, trafficking, poverty and fear and wonderful stories of faith and love.

From there, it was on to Bathurst via Montreal, where my suitcase was dropped from the airplane and was repaired by Air Canada using 600 feet of yellow tape. I was met in Bathurst by a big sign of welcome – I drove through the rain to Dalhousie where I spoke about WUCWO and *companions on the journey* and had to buy yet another suitcase. My travel home was complicated by fog in Bathurst, so I drove to Moncton and finally was able to fly home.

After reconnecting with my husband, I flew to Yellowknife where I met lots of wonderful women and presented a workshop. I arrived in Whitehorse in time to experience the midnight sun. At the Alberta Mackenzie provincial convention, I presented a workshop on WUCWO and my final workshop on the theme.

I returned to Calgary for another brief visit with my husband and then left for Winnipeg without telling him that I was leaving. Oops. He finally called around and learned

that I was at the national resolutions committee meeting.

So: What did I learn? I learned that God walks with us. The League is truly about his work.

I learned that God does not make clones. He has given us all a different set of talents. No two are the same. One president will not do things the same way as another. God is with us and helps us through changing times and changing needs. The League is dynamic and will continue to change.

I learned that there is a great deal of wisdom out there. It comes in many different packages – some tall, some not so tall, some with blonde hair or brown or white or chemically enhanced. Listen to the wisdom of others. Celebrate its diversity and encourage it to move to fruition.

I learned that once a resolution is adopted, it remains with us until the situation is resolved. It becomes League policy. When the League delegation goes to Parliament, it addresses sanctity of life, poverty, suicide, euthanasia, stem cell research – all the issues that remain of great importance. We must develop a mindset at all levels to keep working on a resolution until the situation is resolved to our satisfaction.

I learned that Canada today has a changing face. Cultural diversity is a fact and in the League we see that same diversity. People pray best in their mother tongue and, to make the League more welcoming to those whose first language is not English, we have invited translations of the League prayers. If you can provide a translation, please do so. We will keep it on file so that, if requested, a translation can be provided.

Along with the members of the national executive, I attended conferences, wrote workshops, mentored, discussed issues, researched, read, made hard decisions, issued communiqués, wrote magazine articles, prepared oral reports and wrote letters. This was an excellent executive and I invite you to read their annual reports about the work they have done.

We do what we can because we can. We laugh because laughter is indeed God's gift. We cry because we feel another's pain. We use our talents because we must. We make a difference because we can.

advisors who accompany you. What became very clear to those gathered – bishops, priests, deacons, religious women – was a desire to understand what more can be done to promote the work of the League. You have a strong base of support among the spiritual advisors. To expand that base of support requires education and information. There was a lot of talk as to the different things that we can do to help share with others the League's work so that it can become known.

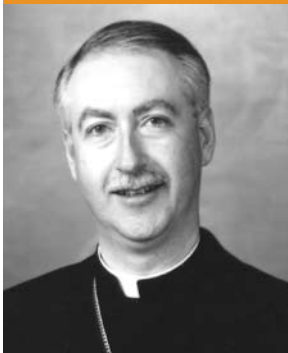
Most of the discussion focused on the resolutions process. How do we make real, at every level, the resolutions that are adopted, particularly at the national level? Sometimes we have the impression, rightly or wrongly, that the focus of the resolutions process is to “move it up the ladder” – we adopt it at the parish level, then at diocesan and provincial levels. It's a wonderful thing if it is “moved up the ladder.” But how often does the conversation go beyond that? In other words, if a resolution makes it to the national level and is adopted, how does it get back “down the ladder”? How do we make sure that members are saying, “What are we going to do about this”? We must not pat ourselves on the back because it made it to the national level, but we must ask, “What does this call us to do at the parish level?” That is probably the most important way that the League's work can be made known to other women in the parish. The support and encouragement of the parish priest was highlighted. At the same time, though, it is the putting of resolutions into practice at the parochial level that really does seem to need exploration and development.

I would like to issue an appeal to you – and I am certain that it would be echoed among the bishops in the country. We have been promised that there will be a vote in Parliament this fall as to whether or not the debate on the nature of marriage will be re-opened. The Catholic Organization for Life and Family put it very well: this is a rare second chance. A terrible mistake was made in changing the definition of marriage. We cannot underestimate that. Now we have a rare second chance to address this mistake and get it reversed. Please get in touch with your member of parliament. Petitions have a purpose but they only go so far. Write letters. The most effective way is to get on the telephone or knock on doors. When you go back to your council, please spread the word. Ask yourself, “What have I done? What am I doing about this?” Ask one another, “What have you done about this?” At the council level ask, “How can we address this issue?” Please, and again from the bishops, thanks for all that you do on this incredibly important issue.

I mentioned at the beginning of this report that you are very well loved by the spiritual advisors across this land. And I know from everything that I've heard from you that you love the spiritual advisors.

Thank you to all of you for everything that you do.

SPIRITUAL ADVISOR



Most Rev. Richard Smith
Bishop of Pembroke

It is a pleasure for me to offer this report to the convention assembled here. The essence of my report is to share with you the conversation that I had with spiritual advisors during our luncheon meeting. I can say without any hesitation that the CWL is loved and held in great regard by the spiritual