

ORAL REPORTS

The following oral reports were given at the 90th annual national convention in Ottawa, Ontario. They may have been edited for spacing purposes.



PRESIDENT



Danielle McNeil-Hessian
Bedford, Nova Scotia

It is amazing to realize that we are part of an organization that has served its members for 90 years. More amazing still is the knowledge that members have served their church, community, country and organizations that support individuals in the developing world for 90 years.

Once again I encourage you to read the reports included in the *90th Annual National Convention Program & 2009 Annual Report* as they are a celebration and an accounting of what has been accomplished by members. Reporting annually is a means of being accountable through committee reports and financial statements. Plans for the future are also presented as well as an opportunity to motivate councils to continue to serve the church in the ministry of The Catholic Women's League of Canada. Please share these reports with other members in your council that they too can see the amazing things being done "For God and Canada".

I am pleased to report that my goal to attend all provincial conventions was realized due to the accommodations made by some of the provincial councils that moved the date of their convention. It is quite an honour to attend conventions and to meet with members from all levels. The national president is held in high esteem across the country, one can not help but be humbled by the members' love and respect for the office of their president.

I attended the Military Ordinate provincial convention which was hosted by the members of Saint Joseph's Chapel, Canadian Forces Base Borden, Ontario. I was greeted at the airport by a military man, the husband of one of the members. This time it took a great deal of patience on his part and mine as we missed each other for two hours at the airport. It was well worth the wait as I was on time for the dramatizations of the women representing the female saints chosen the year before for presentation at this year's convention. Bishop Donald Theriault named a new spiritual advisor, Pastoral Associate Captain Hope Winfield; Hope is a member of the military and also of the League.

This year, I was able to attend not only the Nova Scotia provincial convention but also all three of the diocesan conventions, Halifax, Yarmouth and Antigonish. At all four of the conventions I was honoured to develop the theme, *Women of Peace and Hope*, through sharing activities. It was an interesting challenge to come up with different activities to share with women who attended more than one of the conventions. There were many examples of *faith, fun and fulfillment* in evidence.

In Manitoba the convention was held in Winnipeg which, because of the location of national office, is in many ways my League home. While there I was privileged to attend the executive meeting to witness the dedication with which officers made their plans. In spite of the rain falling on the outside, the sun was shining on the inside as the women of St. Anthony of Padua Parish Council made all the attendees feel welcome in their parish. The provincial spiritual advisor, Father Martin Bradbury, was presented with a certificate at the banquet which was very fitting as not only does Father Bradbury love the League, he is a large part of the *faith, fun and fulfillment* within the provincial council.

From Manitoba I travelled to Saskatchewan where the provincial convention was held in the Saskatoon. Six parish councils worked together to host the convention. Judy Savoy was the theme presenter and a very hard act to follow. In her presentation she used Mark's gospel and spoke of *Calming the Storm*. I used the gospel to talk about the storms of life and staying the course in my presentation on the theme. The women at this convention were very engaged in all of the activities. Saskatchewan is blest with many role models, there were four honorary life members and two members of the national executive in attendance. The beautiful Holy Spirit Parish was where I was first introduced to Our Lady of the Prairies whose statue was stunning.

It was my pleasure to be back in Newfoundland and Labrador, this year for the provincial convention. The welcome was a warm one and the members in attendance were joyful and committed. The provincial executive tried what was called a mini convention. It was decided that this was the last convention of its kind as they wanted to ensure all members would be able to attend in the future. There was plenty to celebrate in the province as one parish council on the brink of disbanding was reactivated and a whole new executive was elected. This council's president reported on a number of very interesting activities.

My last provincial council visit was held in Cornwall, Ontario. I had been to Cornwall before on different occasions to the plenary of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB). However, this was the first time I was able to appreciate the beauty of the city and the warmth of its people. I was picked up at the airport by a committee member. We shared our stories and she told me of her grandchildren, including an adopted granddaughter who would soon arrive from Korea. While I was at the convention I learned that my oldest daughter was adopting a baby that was to be born in a few weeks. At the time of this national convention her granddaughter and my grandson have both arrived.

At this convention there has been a beautiful spirit and a group of women who know how to celebrate with *faith, fun and fulfillment*. Through workshops, and many other activities women came together to celebrate the work being done “For God and Canada”.

December 31st ends the second year of the theme, *Women of Peace and Hope*, and the new theme will begin on January 1st. The theme has given members opportunities for spiritual programs that enhanced both their prayer life and spiritual growth.

At the national level, a new resource, *Prayers and Workshops for Women of Peace and Hope*, was created with input from all members of the executive. I am proud of this resource and the dedicated work of its contributors. The book is a resource that can be used by councils for years to come.

In honour of the *Year for Priests* a letter was sent to all priest spiritual advisors. The names of two priests were selected at random to attend this year’s convention all expenses paid. As well, Archbishop Currie will facilitate a workshop for all spiritual advisors in attendance at the convention.

The technology at national office continues to allow members to access more information. On-line registration is off to a great start and councils are encouraged to try this new method for faster and more accurate information sharing. The executive director is looking into an on-line ordering system.

The e-newsletter continues to improve and councils are encouraged to keep the material coming on a regular basis.

Although some councils have increased their membership, my challenge to members to increase membership by 10% has not been realized, but I am confident that it will continue to be on the agenda of councils. The new membership materials, developed this year, promise to be an asset to future membership campaigns.

By now you are all aware of the sound defeat of Bill C-384 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity)*. A letter was written to all 228 members of parliament who voted to defeat the bill, thanking them not only for their vote but for their commitment to be present when the vote was taken. As well the members of parliament were encouraged to focus on palliative care initiatives.

A letter will be written to Bishop Pierre Morrissette, president of the CCCB regarding the impact on the church on

the sexual abuse crisis which continues to cast a shadow over the church in Canada and the world. The letter will call for an implementation of the recommendations in *From Pain to Hope* and its subsequent update. The letter will ask the CCCB to develop a communications strategy that will serve the church in Canada. Finally the letter will state that members will continue to support their clergy and work with them for the good of God’s people.

I am appreciative for the opportunity I have had to serve as president. I am most grateful for the women that I have met and I shall miss meeting members from across the country in their home province. I am confident that with the leadership of National President Velma Harasen, God’s help and the commitment of members in 2010, the League will thrive long into the future. I look forward to the role of past president, to supporting the new executive and to journeying with you as I continue to serve the League. May Our Lady of Good Counsel intercede for us and guide us as we go forward, striving to support each other “For God and Canada”. ✚

SPIRITUAL ADVISOR



Most Rev. Martin Currie
Archbishop of St. John’s
and Bishop of Grand Falls,
Newfoundland and Labrador

At the spiritual advisors’ workshop we had a wonderful meeting. There were 34 there, priests, sisters, lay people and a great discussion was had. We had four presenters on different aspects of League life and I’ll try to sum up briefly.

First of all is the importance of communication. We need to be able to communicate and priests and spiritual advisors need to be taught that they are to walk with the members of the League. We need to communicate at the parish, diocesan and provincial levels so the knowledge of the League will become known and people will know what the League does. It was even suggested to me by one priest that perhaps members could visit the English seminaries and talk to the seminarians about the League.

The other point made in our group is that there were several priests from various countries. Many of them say it has to be a two-way street. Many of them feel very accepted by the League, no question of colour or language. They too have to understand what the League is about. It was suggested that with the changing face of the church – large numbers of Philipinos, many from African countries and different Asian countries – we should see more diversity in the League. One of the problems is that some ethnic communities have associations of their own and that is good, but how can we educate them and make the League known to them?