

# ODE TO NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 89<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION

**Joan Bona**  
Guest Journalist

**T**hey came from cities, towns and villages throughout Canada to celebrate in solidarity and faith their theme as *Women of Peace and Hope*. **Inspiring, engaging** and **amazing** were the works of members as they came together for the 89<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention of The Catholic Women's League of Canada. Hosted by Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Council, the convention was held in St. John's from August 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. Over 700 delegates, clergy and guests participated in this event, hosted annually since the League's inception in 1921.



Most Rev. Martin Currie

Advisor Most Rev. Martin Currie, Archbishop of St. John's and Bishop of Grand Falls, as the main celebrant. "The Eucharist is about **peace**", Archbishop Currie explained in his homily. He added that when we lose **hope**, we lose our greatest source of strength and encouraged the congregation to keep **hope** alive as long as it lasts. National President Danielle McNeil-Hessian, in her opening remarks, reflected on the League's history and encouraged all members to continue to build **hope** for others. On Monday, Most Rev. Daniel J. Bohan, Archbishop of Regina, presided at the morning Eucharistic celebration. His message to the assembled was reflected in the gospel message of John 12:24-26 of the sown

**Inspiring** were the daily Eucharistic celebrations, spiritual programs and gathering day keynotes addresses which caused all to reflect on the League's theme. The official opening Eucharistic celebration was held at the Basilica of St. John the Baptist with National Spiritual

seeds and Jesus' instruction to the disciples to follow Him and honour the Father. Bishop Bohan noted that because of our Christian faith other people are important to us and that our relationship with God and Jesus permeates our actions.

Gathering day featured keynote addresses by Dr. Myrtle Power, Ph.D and Fr. Mark Miller, C.Ss.R., Ph.D. Both speakers pondered the League's theme and focus for 2009 of "Welcome, friend" and palliative care. Dr. Power encouraged members to be pillars of change bringing **hope** to the world by witness and testament to the gospel. Fr. Miller provided insight into end-of-life care, sharing his personal experiences in palliative care ministry, and empowered members to be frontrunners in caring and support for the dying, their caregivers and families. As a sign of welcome and unity, honorary life members provided an opportunity for attendees to contemplate, in a personal examination of conscience, the theme of **peace**. They later formed an honour guard in welcoming newly commissioned life members. Seven new life members were present for the commissioning ceremony.

With pride and generosity, a donation of \$2,200 was presented to Daffodil Place. The money represented the amount collected from Monday's Eucharist. Daffodil Place provides lodging and support for cancer treatment patients in St. John's.

**Engaging** were the resolutions, business sessions and networking opportunities held throughout Monday afternoon, Tuesday and Wednesday. Prior to the business sessions, members gathered on Sunday afternoon to unite in prayer and discuss the proposed resolutions. Originating at the parish level, the resolutions process addresses issues which members

have identified in areas of legislation and social justice. Three resolutions were adopted by voting and accredited delegates. Resolution 2009.01 Exit Strategies for Prostituted Persons deals with persons wanting to exit a life of prostitution by the provision of sustained core funding from all levels of government. Secondly, concerned with Citizenship and Immigration Canada's policy for temporary residence permits, Resolution 2009.02 Protection and Support



Honorary life members at the closing Eucharistic celebration. L-R: Seated: Irene Lefort, Dorothy Brocklehurst, Lucille Cullen, Ardis Beaudry, Mary Matthews, Jean Mahoney. Standing: Lorette Noble, Agnes Bedard, Marie Cameron, Joan Chesser, Claire Heron, Vivian Bosch.

Services for Foreign Victims of Human Trafficking urges the federal government to enact legislation for protection and support services for these victims. The resolution also encourages provincial councils to appeal to their provincial/territorial governments to provide necessary services for victims. A third, Resolution 2009.03 Hate Messages, urges the federal government to: restrict proceedings on matters of hate solely to the *Criminal Code*, and repeal of section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

The convention received reports of each member of the national executive on the collective work and accomplishments of members at parish, diocesan and provincial levels. Close to \$4,000,000 was donated in 2008 by members in active support of the communities they serve and the global community at large. Members also received 24 bursaries totalling \$11,128.45 to assist with adult faith formation. Opportunities for networking through organized luncheons for standing committees, life members and spiritual advisors took place on Monday and Tuesday. On Tuesday evening, each provincial council held its own dinner gathering at various establishments in downtown St. John's.

In opposition to proposed Bill C-384 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity)*, a letter was sent to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and every member of parliament. The letter conveyed the League's strong opposition to the proposed bill which, if enacted, would allow for euthanasia and assisted suicide.

A presentation by Dr. Robert Walley, founder of MaterCare International, concluded Tuesday's itinerary. The League's support of MaterCare to improve the maternal health of women in Africa will continue through its national voluntary fund.

In partnership with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO), approximately \$11,000 was contributed to fulfill WUCWO's mission of evangelization and work in human development. The amount represents an increase of \$3,000 over the previous year.

**Amazing** were the excursions which illustrated Newfoundland and Labrador's history and culture. On Saturday, a Taste of Newfoundland dinner and celebration was held at the Remax Centre/St. John's Curling Club.

The audience was treated to hospitality and music through fiddle, song and a skit from The Holy Show which featured Fr. Paul Lundrigan. Fr. David Butler gave a momentous rendition of Frederick Weatherly's song, *Danny Boy*. A guided bus tour of St. John's, Cape Spear, Petty Harbour and Signal Hill launched Sunday's agenda. With song and laughter, the Monday evening entertainment gave witness to an official screech-in experience for members of the national executive who, in true Newfoundland tradition, were drawn reluctantly on stage. In fine form they ate a Newfoundland delicacy (bologna), kissed a cod and recited "long may your big jib draw" (may we add that some aspects were quite difficult for the ladies). The cast of Spirit of Newfoundland Dinner Theatre celebrated in rich Celtic music and culture and encouraged audience participation.



National executive members being screeched in.

### ST. JOSEPH PARISH COUNCIL HIGHLAND CREEK, ONTARIO

Members of St. Joseph Parish Council really took to heart the "Welcome, friend" component of the *Women of Peace and Hope* theme. Choosing a decidedly social justice focus, members collected petitions against human trafficking during a Community Event on Refugee Sponsorship and Settlement Information night.



L-R: St. Joseph Parish Council members Bertha Redmond and Lucia Vacca at the display where petitions were collected.

### SACRED HEART PARISH COUNCIL MOUNT RYAN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Members of Sacred Heart Parish Council got together for one last time, before the council disbanded, to present service pins and to celebrate the 58 years of service so ably given to the League. The decision to disband was not made lightly and was due to the closure of the parish. While the event was bittersweet, members do look forward to joining with their sisters at St. Patrick Parish Council in Augustus.



The grand finale of the convention included the closing Eucharistic celebration on Wednesday which was held at Mary, Queen of Peace Church with Most Rev. Douglas Crosby, Bishop of Corner Brook and Labrador, as celebrant. In his homily, Bishop Crosby cited that the League is resilient, capable and strong. He asked members to speak well of priests and to be a blessing to them. Additionally, the bishop encouraged every member to speak, call or write one priest and express thanks. The reaffirmation ceremony of national officers followed the Eucharistic celebration.

Packed to the rafters, the gala banquet provided ample opportunity to celebrate the warmth and kindness of members, not only in Newfoundland and Labrador, but throughout Canada. Members of the Kilkenny Crew band prompted some to kick up their heels in jig and dance.

Within the ballroom walls and throughout the convention, a celebration of peace and hope was depicted in many genres. Through art, five murals were displayed which represented eastern, central and western regions, the northern peninsula and Labrador. The murals were reproduced as souvenirs for

the convention. With reverence, each provincial president presented a red rose in memory of deceased members, with a white rose representing deceased spiritual advisors presented by Danielle McNeil-Hessian. The roses adorned the statue of Mary. In song, the music selections so wonderfully sung by the choir echoed throughout. Through fellowship, the assembled gave witness to faith by offering one another a sign of peace. With hope, they were encouraged to be beacons for others, to go “light their world” and pass forward the sign of peace so that hope may flourish.

The camaraderie and smiles of the Newfoundland and Labrador membership was demonstrated throughout the convention. Where else in Canada will you find a dialect so treasured, especially if “you come from away”? Their gift of time and talent gave witness to the dedication and warmth of their shared kinship, affiliation and pride in their Celtic heritage.

Next year, the 90<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention will be held in Ottawa from August 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. A jubilant and colourful group from the Archdiocese of Ottawa extended an invitation to the assembled. †



National officers were reaffirmed following the closing Eucharistic celebration. From left to right: National Chairperson of Legislation Judy Lewis, National Chairperson of Resolutions Barb Dowding, National Chairperson of Community Life Mary Nordick, National Chairperson of Christian Family Life Pearl Bridgwater, National Chairperson of Spiritual Development Terri Scott, National Past President and Chairperson of Laws Lorette Noble, National Secretary-Treasurer Peggy Roche, National Second Vice-President and Chairperson of Education and Health Cecile Miller, National First Vice-President and Chairperson of Communications Betty Anne Brown, National President-elect and Chairperson of Organization Velma Harasen, National President and Chairperson of International Relations Danielle McNeil-Hessian. Presiding over the ceremony is National Spiritual Advisor Most. Rev Martin Currie. At the podium, Honorary Life Member Agnes Bedard leads the service.

## NATIONAL OFFICE NOTE

Have you received your permanent membership card? If your per capita fees were remitted to your parish council prior to June 30<sup>th</sup>, you should have received your membership card via your membership chairperson.

If you have not yet received it, please contact your membership chairperson. If she does not have it, she may contact national office and request a second card be sent. Thank you.

## WELCOME BACK TO REACTIVATED COUNCILS:

Blessed Sacrament, Toronto, Ontario  
Holy Rosary, Toronto, Ontario