



## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

offices are deemed necessary for the good functioning of our councils and what responsibilities fall under each office.

Quite a number of ideas have come up during the course of this past year to change or add to the P&P. Much thought must go into this, as you can imagine, since the challenge is to suggest ideas that will work in every circumstance no matter where the council is situated, how many members it has, and a multitude of factors that make each council almost unique. In other words, it's a constant challenge to have the P&P be a "one size (one solution) fits all" manual.

And then there is always the human factor: is it the policy or procedure that needs to be changed, or how we interact with each other? Remember, we are being called to be *Women of Peace and Hope*.

Nevertheless, in this past year we have made a few clarifying changes. For example, there is now a growing number of women who are being appointed as spiritual advisors at various levels. Some of these are members who have been well trained, often benefitting from the National Bursary Fund. One previous criterion stated that women spiritual advisors do not pay membership fees. In the case of a member, this would mean that she would not accumulate years of service, so this criterion has been updated and changed to say that a member may indeed continue to pay her membership fees while acting as a spiritual advisor.

Another role of all past presidents is being responsible for archives and history. This is a very important aspect of League work and it is not a given that every past president has a natural affinity for such work. We are, however, blessed with members who are keenly interested and such are those who have worked this past year to bring our national archives up to date and ready to be sent for safekeeping in the provincial archives of Manitoba and the national archives in Ottawa. They had to catch up with about 15 years of accumulated documents and are now near to reaching what may be called a "state of maintenance". In order that we keep our national archives up to date the committee is now a permanent one. Incidentally, if there are any of our members who are trained archivists, do drop me a line through national office. We would love to know about you in case we need your help.

I cannot end this report without thanking all of you from the bottom of my heart for your prayers during my recent and unexpected health issue. I have always been terrified of being in hospital and could hardly believe how calm I was during this experience. It was your prayers that sustained me; your stories that you shared with me cheered me up and surrounded me with incredible love. Every one of your cards is hanging up in our house and the grandchildren think it looks better than Christmas. What a caring sisterhood we have. †

**Danielle McNeil-Hessian**  
Bedford, Nova Scotia

I will defer the report of international relations to World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) Vice-President for North America Agnes Bedard. While Agnes is coming to the microphone, I will report that from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009, through donations from councils and individuals, \$11,279.88 was collected for WUCWO. This was an increase from \$8,000 last year and I would say is due, in no small part, to Agnes.



**Agnes Bedard:** I thank you for supporting my participation in WUCWO, which is so important for the League. The world is small and becoming smaller, and as we walk with our sisters, we are indeed affected by what is going on all over the world. Before I was a League member, I was a member of Birthright International, and I knew that any Catholic woman who was not a member of Birthright needed to be. Once, when I needed something for Birthright, I went the local CWL parish council and asked it for help. I was asked why I was not a member of the League, so I joined.

When I became president of the CWL parish council, probably six days after I joined, I knew it was absolutely necessary that every Catholic woman become a member. The most important thing was the parish; we didn't need the diocesan or regional councils. We wanted everybody to focus on the parish.

But then you know what happened? I was past president and became a part of the diocesan council. I became a diocesan president and now the question was, "Why isn't there a council in every parish in the diocese? What's wrong with the parishes that there isn't a council in every single parish?" – and that became my focus.

Well, that lasted until I became a part of the provincial council. And then I looked around and said, "The dioceses really need to pick it up so that we grow as a group," and everything was so important.

But as part of the provincial council, you end up on national. And that lasted until I was national president. And I got to go visit you. And you were so nice to me because I was part of the CWL. And we had wonderful times. But then those passed too and guess where I am now?

As I look at a globe I know that all over this world there are Catholic women with whom we have to communicate and for whom we have to be voice. Some have a voice and some don't:



*For God and Canada*

most don't. Your problems are their problems; your prayers are their prayers. The hand they want to hold is your hand.

The organization with whom the League has had its longest involvement is WUCWO. Before the national organization of the League was, there were women in Canada who belonged to local CWLs interested in joining with the women in Europe. Shortly after the inception of WUCWO, the League became very active as a national organization.

The League has recognized the importance of being in contact with, listening to, sharing with, and being there for, its sisters from all over the globe. This contact is absolutely necessary, especially in today's world, as it gets smaller and smaller.

You know WUCWO is having an assembly in Jerusalem in 2010. It's the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WUCWO and will be a pilgrimage assembly. We will be meeting at the hotel right across from the New Gate. The mornings will begin with prayer, followed by a presentation and then a pilgrimage. Attendees will visit those sights that were walked 2,000 years ago by the Man we call our Saviour. Together we will walk and together we will pray. Each day we will do the same.

This year, five WUCWO board members went to Jerusalem to see how we could plan for the assembly. The first day we had mass in the Filipino language at the Mount of Beatitudes. The next mass in Slovak was on Mount Tabor. The third mass in Arabic was in Old Jerusalem: a picture of the world – a diverse and universal church.

I invite you to come; walk in His footsteps. The theme of this assembly is *You will be My Witnesses*. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) We know all of you can't come, but we also know that you can take home the message of WUCWO, which is the message of a sisterhood without borders, a sisterhood through which we can share our prayers and concerns.

On Monday at lunch, I met with some dear friends to talk about WUCWO. We talked about the reality; most parish councils know little about WUCWO and what it does so we tried to come up with something pretty basic to start promoting WUCWO. We will be producing a workshop that can be used in parish councils to give a basic understanding of WUCWO and stimulate you to begin developing a prayerful relationship with your international sisters.

We need your prayer. WUCWO is without a structure such as the League. The League is, by far, the best structure of Catholic women in the world. In some African countries, there are as many as 250 languages; how do you possibly communicate with one another on a national scale? How lucky we are.

One of the things WUCWO has is non-governmental organization (NGO) status with the United Nations (UN). When the UN began, WUCWO was one of 30 NGOs; now it is one of thousands. Across the world, WUCWO volunteers cover the UN events. I want you to pray for these women. In New York,

we have Arlene Barron-Champoux; in Paris, Anne-Marie Terreau, Odile Leleu, Chantal Chevallier and Evelyne Johnen; in Geneva, Zina Rassam and Jocelyne de Stadelhofen; in Rome, Maria Giovanna Ruggieri; and in Strausbourg, Anna Schaeffer. Please pray for them to continue to be our voices. †

## ALBERTA MACKENZIE



**Fran Lucas**  
Edmonton, Alberta

Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council membership for 2008 increased to 10,098 and, from conversations with the five diocesan presidents, those numbers are expected to increase for 2009.

Councils across the province have embraced the theme *Women of Peace and Hope* by incorporating it in their convention theme. This theme has been carried out with a provincial focus on letter writing to stop human trafficking in relation to the 2010 Olympics in British Columbia. The councils in each diocese have taken a different week of the month to communicate with the mayor of Vancouver, the organizer of the Olympics, and provincial and federal governments on this issue. Sanctity of life issues, from conception to natural death, including euthanasia, assisted suicide and the personhood of the unborn have been brought to provincial and national politicians' attention, again drawing the members together on common issues. Many councils in Alberta wrote to the premier and provincial minister of health indicating displeasure with the pharmaceutical and continuing care strategies for seniors which would lay the heaviest burden of cost on those who require the most care. One diocese cites the Red Letter Campaign for the personhood of the unborn being a powerful activity for its members.

At the provincial convention in June the following four items were some of the highlights:

- 1) Delegates signed a White Ribbon Against Pornography ribbon and at the opening ceremonies presented it to Member of Parliament LaVar Payne, who indicated he would be bringing it to parliament.
- 2) Training workshops were conducted by each of the provincial officers with help from at least two life members.
- 3) A motion was carried to have a donation of 50 cents per member made to the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations from the provincial treasury, based on 2008 membership figures. A further motion was carried to encourage all parish councils to match the contribution.
- 4) Dr. Clem Persaud spoke on the abortion and breast cancer link; and Thomas Bouchard, a third year medical student who belongs to a group called Canadian Physicians for Life,