

# CATHOLIC GIRLS' LEAGUE PILOT PROJECT

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An exciting pilot project is underway in several provinces across Canada: the Catholic Girls' League (CGL) project, sponsored by The Catholic Women's League of Canada.

The CGL began in Tillsonburg, Ontario, after several months of preparation and information gathering. The first CGL meeting was held October 9, 2002. An investiture ceremony in St. Mary Church followed this first meeting on December 11, 2002. The club was the first of its kind in the London diocese and is sponsored by St. Mary CWL Parish Council.

As a result of the Tillsonburg initiative under the very capable leadership of member Pat Van der Hayden, and under the direction of former National Chairperson of Christian Family Life Cecile Miller, draft documents *Steps to Forming a Catholic Girls' League* and *Catholic Girls' League Administration Manual* were prepared in 2006. The following excerpts are drafts only and will be reviewed before the 87<sup>th</sup> annual national convention to be held in August 2007.

"The name of the League shall be the Catholic Girls' League, hereinafter called the CGL, a name chosen because it is consecrated to united Catholic action through devotion to the Blessed Mother, under whose patronage it has been formed."

"The objects shall be to unite Catholic girls of Canada (1) to achieve individual and collective spiritual development (2) to recognize the human dignity of all people everywhere."

1. General Membership: Any Catholic girl between the ages of 10 and 15 years may become a member, with voting privileges and with eligibility for office by election or appointment. She must also demonstrate a willingness to contribute to all phases of the CGL program."

2. Associate Membership: Any non-Catholic girl aged 10 to 15 years inclusive may become a member, with voting privileges, but without eligibility for office by election or appointment."

"The sponsoring Catholic Women's League council shall provide the chief counselor(s) as well as a religious leader."

"Each new committee leader chosen will hold the designation of Mary's leader and will be placed on probation for a period not shorter than six months. During this period, Mary's leaders will not have full responsibility to supervise, although will

be required to participate fully in each activity. After this probationary period, they will be considered Mary's leaders."

"Committees: Spiritual, Activities, Social, Justice and Social Action"

CWL councils presently sponsoring a CGL council consider this to be a very positive experience. Natalie Rose, a member of St. Theresa CWL Parish Council in Edmonton, Alberta, writes that she is "...pleased with the progress of the CGL in the Archdiocese of Edmonton" under the initial sponsorship of Edmonton Archdiocesan Council. This led to an invitation to present at the Jean Forest All Girls Leadership Academy, resulting in the beginnings of a second CGL council sponsored by St. Joseph's Basilica CWL Parish Council, under the leadership of Edmonton Archdiocesan Past President Fran Lucas. Natalie points out, "There is no doubt that I am learning more than I am teaching. What a blessing both projects have been. Some girls have already expressed their desire to join the League when they turn sixteen."

Susan Kaller, Our Lady of Good Counsel CWL Parish Council in Candiac, Quebec, used a PowerPoint presentation at the first parent/child information meeting for a local CGL, as well as a creative brochure to announce and invite potential members. The presentation is based on questions and answers found in the two draft documents provided. Susan points out that, "The PowerPoint presentation helps to relay information visually and at a good pace, while allowing time for questions. The Information Meeting with parents and children both included is a good way to start up the CGL. Advertising through the parish bulletin, CWL council and word of mouth works well to get a good base group. Refreshments and goodies are always a hit no matter how simple!"

Girls of this age group enjoy being active and a variety of creative and fun activities reveal the diversity of the groups. The CGL at St. Mark Church in Prescott, Ontario, along with its sponsoring CWL council, entered a float in the 2006 Christmas parade under the new League theme, *Love One Another*. Leader Carolyn Wilson emphasized how helpful the girls are in serving at teas and helping with fundraising events. A social justice focus of support for families of casualties in Afghanistan and a crafting focus of making gifts for children in the liturgy groups were targeted as age-appropriate interests in a CGL formed in Lindsay, Ontario. In the words of leaders

Peterborough Diocesan Past President Glenda Klein and member Joanne Hough, “We are having a most enjoyable time and the girls are most responsive to our initiatives.” The two CGLs in Edmonton made advent wreaths and prayer books, as well as creating valentines for shut-in members of the sponsoring CWL council. In the words of Natalie Rose, “The joy and dedication I am seeing in the girls is rewarding. They seek to learn everything about the League, evidenced by their numerous questions.”

Janet Koller, St. Alexander CWL Parish Council President-elect in Fenwick, Ontario, hopes that introducing a CGL would meet the needs of young girls and their mothers

in her parish. “Many of the activities for young girls lack the spiritual guidance and support that is essential in development and spiritual growth. I truly believe the CWL of our parish could play an important role in ministering to our young girls and to help prepare them as women. I know the end result would bring rejuvenation and spiritual growth to our parish community.”

As national Christian family life chairperson, I couldn't agree more with Janet Koller's summation of how important it is to support and develop young girls. It is hoped that at the completion of the pilot project, this project will be further developed and launched nation-wide. †

# CHILD'S ART CAPTURES SPIRIT OF THE MISSIONS



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In the winter issue of *The Canadian League* you read in the article “Do You Know What a Mission Is?” about the eager students answering Fr. Philip Kennedy's questions during a visit to their school. The school visit is a main part of the Catholic Missions In Canada (CMIC) School Awareness Program.

Another part of the School Awareness Program is the CMIC and ME! Story and Art Contest. Started in 2006, the contest invites students in both elementary and secondary schools to submit a story or a piece of art work that either reflects a mission community in Canada or depicts how they see CMIC. Students are also invited to submit a short story if they don't feel that they have been blessed with artistic talent. Students of all ages, whether they are in private or public school or home schooled, are encouraged to participate and be as creative as possible.

What a thrill it was to view the talents and visions of today's youth! After much consideration and deliberation, the staff of CMIC selected a winner, Kenneth Lau Kwan Kit, a Grade 7 student at St. Raymond Catholic School in Mississauga, Ontario. Kenneth's art embodies the purpose and spirit of CMIC.

The drawing depicts outstretched hands lovingly holding a Canadian maple leaf. You can almost see how gently the hands are holding the leaf, showing its fragility and how it needs to be protected. The canvas behind the hands has two images. One is a beautiful day full of sunbeams, blue sky and green grass. The other side depicts an inspiring moonlit starry night. On the wrist of the right hand is a youthful green

bracelet, off which a simple wooden cross hangs.

This artwork can be interpreted in many ways. One way is that our country (the leaf) is fragile and needs to be protected. What better protector than our Catholic youth (hands and cross bracelet). Another is that as Catholics (cross bracelet) we must love and protect our country (leaf in hands).

Regardless of how this drawing touches you, one thing cannot be denied. Is it not awe inspiring to see how a child interprets the work of our missionaries?

Youth today are passionate about causes they support and connect to. CMIC has just scratched the surface of this energetic resource. Going through the schools is the most logical way to reach the youth, however, compact curricula and busy schedules make it difficult for teachers to find time to teach their students about our missions and the missionaries that serve them.

CMIC is asking League members to help us reach the youth. If you have any connections in the schools in your area, please let them know about our youth awareness program. Maybe your parish youth group would like our president, Fr. Kennedy, or a missionary to visit and share their experiences. Information about the School Awareness Program can be found on the CMIC website at [www.cmic.info/schools](http://www.cmic.info/schools) or by calling us directly at (866) 937-2642.

There are so many youth in Canada that are eager to serve God and nurture their faith by supporting the less fortunate right here in Canada. Please help us show our youth that Canada is still a mission country. †