

LIFE MEMBERSHIP IN THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA

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How often have you heard a comment such as, "I am sure that Mary is a life member as she is 80 years old and has been a CWL member as long as I can remember!" In most organizations involving volunteers, a life membership is a reward given for being a long-time, active member. However, this is not what a life membership means in The Catholic Women's League of Canada. At the moment, the League has 11 honorary life members and 324 life members.

An honorary life membership is presented to the national president on the completion of her term of office, in recognition of the demanding service and leadership necessary in carrying out her duties as national president.

Life membership is a privilege as well as an honour. Privilege entails responsibility. When a provincial or diocesan executive wishes to nominate a member for life membership, this is not a surprise gift given to her as a reward for long-term service. The nominee must have demonstrated her love of the League, her encouragement of others and her ability to participate in study, research, presentations, workshops, etc. She must agree to continue serving at national level on committees and by preparing briefs, researching reports and resolutions, facilitating workshops, and attending conferences or meetings at the request of the national president. This is a great commitment and responsibility that must not be taken lightly.

There are definite criteria that must be met in order to be nominated for a life membership. The nominee must have held executive positions at diocesan level for a minimum of four years, culminating in a two-year term as president. She must have also held executive positions at provincial level for a minimum of four years, not to include the term served as diocesan president. In Ontario, with 13 diocesan councils, the nominee must have served on diocesan level for at least eight years and have been a diocesan past president. The Military Ordinariate, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island provincial councils have no diocesan level, so the nominee must have served on provincial executive for a minimum of eight years.

Honorary life and life members maintain their membership by paying their annual per capita fees through their parish council. This acknowledges the equal status and importance of all members, whether they are on parish, diocesan, provincial or national council. It also recognizes the importance of the parish council as the basic unit of the League. A life member has a permanent place on national council, rewarding her with voting privileges as an accredited delegate at annual diocesan, provincial and national conventions.

Showing acknowledgement and rewarding long service in the League can be expressed in a variety of ways that do not place heavy demands on the member. This can be in the form of a membership scroll, a certificate of merit, League service pins, or holding a special event in her honour. These show appreciation for the commitment and service of the member without requiring her to continue to work for the League at the national level.

Because of their commitment and experience, life members provide valuable mentorship and leadership encouragement to newer members. The national executive encourages members and councils to utilize the talents and gifts offered by their life members. Source: *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, Article VII. †

MEMBERS WERE REPRESENTED AT THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS IN DECEMBER, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY:

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency Workshop and National Forum on Seed, Winnipeg (Manitoba Provincial President Terri Scott and Manitoba Provincial Chairperson of Community Life Monica Brechka)
- Segelberg Lecture on The Ends of Life, Halifax (Life Member Mary MacLeod)
- 19th Annual FAC-NGO Human Rights Consultations, Ottawa (National Chairperson of Resolutions Betty Anne Brown and Life Members Diane Curley and Anida Simurda)