

# WELCOME, FRIEND!



**Barbara Dowding**  
National Chairperson of Resolutions

“Cicero defined friendship as an accord of wills, tastes, and thoughts, as a harmonious agreement in all matters, divine and human accompanied by mutual goodwill and affection....the mutual goodwill and affection which are a part of the harmonious agreement in friendship are essentially altruistic [that is, disinterested and not self-seeking]” (*Friends and Friendship for St. Augustine*, Sister Marie Aquinas). Cicero spoke of true and perfect friendship as one of life’s greatest treasures.

It can be said that friends want what is best for the other, offer sympathy and empathy, are honest and speak the truth even when its difficult and offer mutual understanding. When we talk about welcoming a friend, it is in this context – that we know the person we reach out to. But before friendship, what was there? Who made the first advance? When did the stranger become the friend?

In our zeal to be *Women of Peace and Hope* we feel the urge to open our arms and welcome all, to embrace our friends and make new ones. In parish councils we see familiar faces, at mass the same, and in neighbourhoods, people that we recognize. To make the leap from stranger or even acquaintance to friend is going to require some determination and creativity. As we become more and more a multicultural society, the challenges grow to be inclusive and accepting. Look around your council – who is missing? How many women from other countries, cultures and traditions are in your midst? Look at the faces and ask yourself the question.



In the 2006 Census, Statistics Canada reported more than 200 different ethnic origins in Canada; 83.9% of immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 were born in regions other than Europe. Further, fully three-quarters of the immigrants who arrived during this time belonged to a visible minority group. While the statistics may not surprise you, the reality of finding these women in parish councils might.

One way of offering hospitality might be to start a welcoming committee under the community life standing committee that would work with the parish office to ensure each new Canadian (or anyone else!) is properly recognized. Some years ago, a Vancouver diocesan project called “Welcome Newcomers” advocated for a personal way to make women part of the parish community. So many new Canadian women have husbands who go to work and children in school where English is the norm, but they stay home. Let’s find ways

to share the gift of hospitality as only women can, to meet on common ground (coffee, tea, lunch or a walk), to extend that welcome and make new friends. In celebrating our differences, sharing backgrounds, culture and traditions, we all grow – from newcomers or strangers to friends or sisters.

For faith, fun and fulfillment, gather a group and make a call or bake a cake. Read again the definition above – see what happens!

For more information on ways to make newcomers welcome and for a list of practical information that could be offered, please feel free to contact me through national office. †



## COMPLETE WITH LOVE PIES

**St. John Bosco Parish Council, Edmonton, Alberta**

St. John Bosco Parish Council is justifiably proud of the ten year fundraising success story of its “Complete With Love CWL Pies”. Proceeds from sales at the annual bazaar raise funds for youth, parish and community projects. Every item used to create the handcrafted pies is fresh, including the donated apples, and the pies have been welcomed as far north as Cold Lake. Pictured are the talented members who donate their time and creativity, including a gentleman volunteer.