

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## SINCE MY INSTALLATION AS NATIONAL PRESIDENT...

**Agnes Bedard**  
National President

**M**y initial reason for joining the CWL was to get help for Birthright International. It was a **strategy** that bore fruit in a wondrous way.

I loved being parish council president. I learned so much, even though I was the last president to host The CWL Tea (12 people came...we had planned for 100). We had two very supportive spiritual advisors (Frs. Lemire and Gillis) who often both came to the meetings. They were our friends and part of the CWL family. As regional chair, I had interesting responsibilities and worked with parish councils in all sorts of situations. I loved being diocesan president; I drove all over the diocese, met wonderful women (more CWL family/friends), wore out a set of tires and collected speeding tickets. I never wanted the two years to end. As provincial president, I travelled from Inuvik to Allerston speaking (I used to sing my reports) and was exposed to the national executive where I made friends (CWL family) from all over Canada. What a gift that was. Oh, to be provincial president forever! And now, as you read this, there are only a few months left of my term as national president. I have loved this experience. It has been a very comfortable pew and a wonderful place to be.

Since my installation, I have been warmly welcomed at council meetings from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland and Labrador. I have been present at regional meetings, convention planning meetings, provincial and diocesan conventions, and parish council meetings that needed, or didn't need, assistance, or were celebrating anniversaries. I was always welcomed and found joy, companionship and love.

My **strategy** when I became president was to wholeheartedly embrace the job. I knew God would walk with me and, truly, He has rescued me from the "what am I going to do, say or write" situation. I have learned a great deal. What I have seen has inspired me.

I have witnessed success in large and small councils. Regardless of whether all standing committees were occupied, there was laughter, support, joy and kindness. Members of all councils have



much to offer to each other and to the parish community.

For councils at all levels, well thought out **strategies**, that is good planning, will result in good meetings – meetings that reflect our identity as Catholic women, united in gospel values, called to holiness through service to the people of God. The meeting room is a holy space, a sacred space, where we come together to facilitate our journey with Jesus. Some **strategies** that I have found in successful councils:

**Hospitality Strategies:** Members were welcomed verbally, hugged, asked to sign a nicely bound book, given a name tag, hugged, asked to write personal intentions for mass, hugged, encouraged to write their name for the prayer partner draw, given a cup of tea and hugged.

**Growth in Faith Strategies:** Councils used Liturgy of the Hours at meetings, held annual retreats, facilitated bible study groups, planned pre-meeting Eucharistic celebrations, discussed

papal encyclicals and invited guest speakers.

**Communication Strategies:** Telephone committees contacted members prior to each meeting, or following the meeting if they were unable to attend. Councils sent periodic newsletters.

**Welcoming New Member Strategies:** Members with League knowledge and great interpersonal skills were designated to welcome new members. They identified new members, talked with them, prepared and presented them with welcome kits and formally introduced them at the gatherings.

**Sharing the Load Strategies:** Councils embraced co-presidencies (in Hamilton, I met a co-president who mentioned how she loved sharing the experience with her friend), revolving presidencies (three or four members sharing the chair and the duties) or multiple committee members. Councils assigned all members to a standing committee to support the chairperson.

**Mentoring Strategies:** Members shared knowledge and expertise, listened and learned from the young and the not so young and encouraged everyone to take on new positions to develop and use their God-given talents. Mentoring pairs were established to facilitate present activities and to prepare for the future.



**Birthdays Strategies:** Councils kept track of birthdays and held monthly celebrations where cupcakes with candles were given.

**Good Meeting Strategies:** The rule of 30:30:30 worked well, i.e., 30 minutes of prayer, 30 minutes of business and 30 minutes of play/celebration/listening. *The Canadian League* and the CWL website were used for information, programming ideas and workshops.

Two years is not long enough. As you read this, I will be visiting councils in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Yukon and Saskatchewan. I will be listening and speaking, facilitating workshops and feeling welcomed and loved.

Throw into this schedule a nine day visit to the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations in Arlington, Virginia, where I will work with women from all over the world, a week long trip to Ottawa to meet with the new federal government, a three day trip

to Winnipeg for a national resolutions committee meeting and an eight day trip to the national convention in Halifax.

To all who have been on the national executive during these two years, my appreciation for your support and good work. To my sisters, the members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, thank you for the good work you do for the League; may God bless you. We are all called to holiness. As you say yes to the Lord, accept the invitation to serve wholeheartedly.

As I write this, my last president's message, I recall my thoughts on the way to Vivian Bosch's installation as national president, back in 2000. I remember thinking that if I just had one more year as chairperson of the community life standing committee, I would be able to do a much better job. We are often hesitant upon accepting a position, filled with the Spirit during our term, and then face apprehension when it is time to let go. May God bless you all. †

# NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

## LOVE IS COMMUNICATION



**Lucille Partington**  
National Chairperson of Communications

As a Christian, have you experienced some of those moments when the curtain draws back, just a small bit, and you see the glory of God in some way? I had that experience recently listening to a reflection that National Spiritual Advisor Bishop Richard Smith gave to the national executive. It was during the Olympic Games and he spoke about how athletes know the prize they are striving for (a gold medal) and do everything possible every day to attain that prize. He said that we, as Christians, are striving for an even more wonderful prize since we are living a life that will allow us to see the face of God when we die. Our training, if you want to call it that, is prayer, acts of good work and love. He mentioned that we often fail in our training because we do not have the passion for Christ that an athlete has for a medal.

I know what it is like to get a gold medal because the Province of Alberta gave one to me on the world's day of love, Valentine's Day, for volunteer service in the province. It was a proud moment for me but did not even compare with the feelings I had when Bishop Smith described my real calling... a calling to run the race as if I would get the prize beyond gold and silver – that prize called heaven.

Since Bishop Smith's reflection, I have been thinking about the ways I can improve my effort to live for God. Prayer can easily take second place and it absolutely must be first. It is my training as I run the race toward God. Are you also in training? Join me today as we evaluate our priorities and begin to love and serve God with a new zeal.

We face the refiner's fire. It is not a gold medal we want to

produce but our heart's desire to be holy. Do you know how refiners determine when the gold or silver is heated enough? They can see their reflections! In striving to be holy women of God, we want to be the reflection of God to others. Can you join me in this quest?

After listening to Bishop Smith, I determined that part of this quest was to stand at the cross. Instead of saying bad things to her son's captors or screaming and shouting, it says in scripture that Mary stood at the foot of the cross. It describes her as standing silently and waiting. I am so busy that I often forget just to stand and wait for God. I rush out without receiving my training instructions and then run in the wrong direction and not toward God at all. It seems God wants us just to be. That is my best possible communication. God is love and those who abide in love abide in God.

My mom had an expression, "I may not understand you and the high advice you give, but there is no misunderstanding how you act and how you live."

So, my message of communication to you, my dear CWL sisters, is one of being. Reflect love. I believe it is the BEST way to communicate.

### POSTSCRIPT:

It is wonderful that Pope Benedict XVI wrote about love in his first encyclical. Every person can be apprised of the writings coming from the Vatican daily by going to the Zenit website and subscribing to [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org). The communications from this site are excellent. †