

MINISTRY TO THE VULNERABLE



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When members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada serve in parishes and dioceses, they are often called upon to minister to the most vulnerable in society – youth, disabled, seniors, the homeless and other at-risk persons who may seek assistance.

Ministry to the vulnerable has given rise to an increasing concern in the dioceses across the country, as well as in other organizations that care for vulnerable persons. The concern is for the protection and safety of the vulnerable and for the volunteers who minister to them. In some areas, specific guidelines have been established to address this concern. For example, the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops (OCCB) released provincial guidelines in February 2001 that are designed to:

- safeguard, in all respects, all of those, but most especially the vulnerable, to whom they minister
- ensure the integrity, safety and reputation of its volunteers
- ensure that, as a faith community, the OCCB fulfils all of its obligations

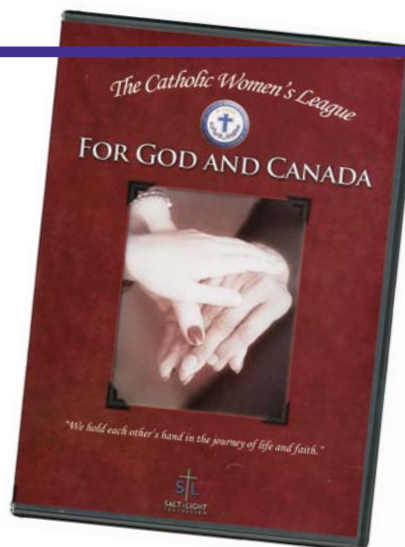
An article in *The New Wine Press*, January/February 2006, described a project undertaken by the Archdiocese of Winnipeg to make people, especially those who minister to children and youth, aware of what constitutes a safe environment. One question, "Who will be trained in creating safe environments?" is answered as "Anyone who ministers to children and youth in parishes and other organizations across the diocese. This may include, but is not limited to: youth group leaders, catechists, youth choir and altar serve coordinators and parish staff."

League members are encouraged to become aware of the importance of such policies, as they may become a necessary requirement for ministry in their parish and diocesan communities. Such policies are now a fact of life in modern society; a sign of the times so to speak. The League is not exempt from taking the necessary steps to protect those to whom members minister, the members themselves, and the church they serve "For God and Canada." †

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