

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Lorette Noble
National President

As I write this, we are at the beginning of the wondrous season of Advent, the start of our liturgical year, when everything old is new again! By the time you read this, however, you will have just recovered from the hectic round of Christmas activities and will be getting used to being in the year 2007.

Some of us still use any excuse to make “new” New Year’s resolutions. (How many are really new?) This is a good thing because it shows how we never give up trying and it reveals how much we want to become better persons.

You will find a special prayer inserted in this magazine which might help with your New Year’s resolutions. Please tear it out and keep it where you’re most likely to see and use it every day. The prayer is intended to develop the new theme, *Love One Another*, for each of us. Christ’s teachings on this theme may be found in John, chapter 15, and Luke, chapter 6. He wants us to love each other as He loves us, and there’s the challenge! Not to love only those who love us (that’s easy to do) but to love everyone, without judging them! For this we need all the help we can get.

The League’s magazine designer has produced a logo for the new theme which you will find on the prayer card, together with an explanation of the meaning of the symbols and the colours. Councils may obtain this logo from the website and use it over the next two years in programs, newsletters and annual reports. It might also help to spark the creativity of members in designing a logo for their own councils.

The first few months of my term have been an incredible experience, even an adventure. One most outstanding, indeed impressive, aspect is the extraordinary volume of mail that is derived, in large part, due to the Internet. It’s so easy these days to sit down at the computer and dash off a message of just a few lines. There’s no need to worry about having a stamp and getting to the mail box. This instant communication has enormous benefits because, for example, problems can be solved sometimes in a day or two, which reduces stress and worry. It’s also useful when you’ve forgotten an important anniversary or event.

Another aspect is travelling as the League’s representative to various meetings, conventions, conferences and forums. It was a particularly busy time from mid-October to mid-November with meetings in different parts of the country and, in one case, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

The first event was the 2006 Canadian Conference of

Catholic Bishops (CCCB) Plenary Assembly held in Cornwall, Ontario, to which the League has been invited as an observer for the last few years. The issues facing the bishops are also matters which concern League members: marriage; euthanasia and assisted suicide; defending immigrants and the appeal process for refugees; and, HIV/AIDS. All Canadian bishops had been to Rome on their regular *ad limina* visits and they were all very appreciative of Pope Benedict XVI’s profound intelligence, gift for listening and solicitude for their diocesan concerns. Msgr. André Gaumond (Sherbrooke), the current CCCB president, spoke of the restructuring and amalgamation of parishes, of the sad situation of Christians in the Holy



National President Lorette Noble presenting congratulatory certificate to National President Catholic Women’s League of England and Wales Sheila Jennings.

Land and of an important document which the CCCB will shortly be publishing on the Sacrament of Penance. There were reports from the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the Catholic Organization for Life and Family, and from the various national commissions on social affairs, evangelization, theology, ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue, canon law and relations with associations of clergy, religious and laity. The keynote speaker was Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, archbishop emeritus of Washington, D.C., whose timely topic was Catholic involvement in public and political life. He encouraged Catholics to dialogue with and question their politicians, and said it was the role of the church “...to teach with courage, to dialogue with clarity and to act with love, ...a love that implies respect, that implies understanding, that implies compassion, that implies truthfulness.” This could be a blueprint for the theme!

My next trip took me across the Atlantic Ocean to the Catholic Women's League of England and Wales to join in its celebration of 100 years of Charity, Work and Loyalty. On behalf of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, I presented a congratulatory certificate to Sheila Jennings, their national president, together with a copy of our history "*Except the Lord Build the House...*" and a copy of two recent magazines. The CWL of England and Wales found our membership numbers most impressive and we received special mention at the opening mass! The convention reminded me so much of any one of ours: they are dealing with the same issues as we are in our resolutions and their keynote speakers dealt with their history (this was, of course, an historic occasion), the progress of Catholic women in England and Wales, and human trafficking. At every break I met scores of women who either had family or friends here in Canada, had visited Canada or were intending to do so. It was an eventful, worthwhile trip, and also an occasion to renew contacts with women I had met at the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations General Assembly last June (including women from Zambia, two of whom had been in my small group!).

Very soon after arriving home, I went to Ottawa for meetings with the federal government to present resolutions. With me were National Chairperson of Resolutions Betty Anne Brown and National Chairperson of Legislation Mary Nordick. We took six resolutions to eight government departments and met with senior policy advisors. While meeting with parliamentary secretary Jason Kenney, Prime Minister Stephen Harper attended for a brief period. As always, everyone appreciated the delegation bringing League members' concerns to their attention. A meeting was also held with the opposition spokesperson on women's issues. Time was found to discuss some previous resolutions that had not yet achieved their purpose, giving delegates an opportunity to update the current government on these issues. There is no doubt that the diversity, range and depth of League concerns impresses the federal government and for this every member and council who has ever worked on putting together a resolution may be justly proud.

Immediately following this, National Chairperson of Spiritual

Development Cecile Miller joined me in Ottawa where we attended the Forum for Catholic Associations and Movements, sponsored by the Episcopal Commission for Associations of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Laity of the CCCB. The theme this year reflected on the church and the Eucharist. Participants were invited to share how they, as individuals and as organizations, saw themselves as a "Eucharistic Church," and how they responded to the challenges of being a "Eucharistic Church." It was a privilege to be asked to participate in the roundtable on how bishops and the faithful collaborate in proclaiming the message of the gospel. Meeting with 17 other lay associations and the three bishops on the episcopal commission and discussing topics like this were very enriching. Participants learned about each other and from each other. League members will be hearing more about the Eucharist as the centre of their faith lives as we approach the 49th International Eucharistic Congress, to be held in Quebec City in June 2008. It is my hope that the League brings a strong delegation there! It's not too early to begin planning for this very special event in the life of the church.

Those members who were at the annual national convention last August in Halifax will remember the presentation by the young team from Salt + Light Television. They were also there to tape interviews and parts of the convention. A short promotional video is the result, and each provincial and diocesan council will, by now, have received its own copy. Take the opportunity to view this DVD and use it on various occasions, such as when recruiting members.

In this issue, you will find a description of what lies in store for you at the 87th annual national convention which will be held in Montreal, August 12-15, 2007. The registration forms are included, so rally a group of League friends and come and join us. You will have an amazing experience!

By now, several parish councils will have newly elected executive teams in place. Let one of our New Year's resolutions be to do everything we can to support them with our love and, above all, with our presence and willingness to help. There are so many small ways we can show that we *Love One Another*. Let's be generous and creative, and have fun doing it; then others will want to join us! †

MEMBERS WERE REPRESENTED AT THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER:

- Family Service Canada annual conference, Winnipeg (Chairperson of Christian Family Life Ann Doucet)
- Church Council on Justice and Corrections public forum, Ottawa (Life Member Sylvia Smith)
- Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute colloquia, Toronto (Life Member Carmel Rumleskie)
- Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Plenary Assembly, Cornwall, Ontario (National President Lorette Noble)
- Catholic Women's League of England and Wales centenary celebration, Brighton, United Kingdom (Lorette Noble)
- Dalhousie University Law School end-of-life lecture, Halifax (Ann Doucet)
- National Caucus on Marriage, Ottawa (Life Member Moira Matthews)
- annual meetings with federal government, Ottawa (Lorette Noble, Chairperson of Resolutions Betty Anne Brown and Chairperson of Legislation Mary Nordick)
- CCCB Forum for Catholic Associations and Movements, Ottawa (Lorette Noble and Chairperson of Spiritual Development Cecile Miller)