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The CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE of CANADA

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MEMO

To: Parish Council Chairpersons of Organization
From: Margaret Ann Jacobs, National Chairperson of Organization
Date: October 23, 2014

New Pope, New Team, New Theme, New Vision

As we start a new term, we all want to activate our refreshed enthusiasm, set goals and make plans to create a solid foundation for future growth and renewal. Based on feedback from interviews made last year concerning non-renewed memberships, there is a perception of the League we must address. Cited were issues like lack of younger members, limited spirituality, lack of friendship within the League, lack of opportunity to pursue new ideas, council politics, dissatisfaction with council activities, inactive councils and unhappiness with parish priests. Certainly we have all been a little disillusioned at times, but now is the time to take action to engage our members more fully. This engagement, my sisters, must begin at the parish level.

If we are to fulfil our mission and stay true to the Objects of the League, we need to revisit the roots of the organization.

The new theme beginning in January 2015, *One Heart, One Voice, One Mission*, is an amazing tool for us to use as we recommit ourselves "...to better nurture and tend the Lord's vineyard, to help realize his dream, his loving plan for his people" (Pope Francis' Holy Mass For the Opening of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family).

We challenge all members at the parish level to re-evaluate current practices and make a commitment to embrace the new theme.

With one heart centred on Christ, we welcome, embrace and accept all women with gentleness, mercy, forgiveness, compassion and affirmation. We commit ourselves to transformation through a positive attitude that reflects being present to others, one-on-one, in a listening, sharing and accompanying manner. We encourage you to take on activities that will demonstrate this commitment to action through one heart i.e., personal visitation, offering rides, sitting with someone who needs a friend or sharing personal stories. Can each member make a commitment to being truly a League sister in this manner?

With one voice in unity, we share our story joyfully, proclaiming the truth of the gospel with courage, passion and zeal. We will become honestly aware of the needs of others who may not have a voice, develop the skills to speak our faith and advocate for the needs of others. We will write letters, make

personal testimonials of our beliefs and join a bible study or other faith development group where we speak our faith in unity with other Christians around the world. Can each member accept the challenge of speaking with one voice with other Christian women who allow the Spirit of God to enkindle in them the fire of love?

With one mission in conviction, we will reach out in service as witnesses of the new evangelization, first with our own conversion as baptized, confirmed Catholics who have personally encountered the Lord. We will endeavour to spread the Good News of the gospel in word and action. We will actively support and participate in the work of each standing committee. Can each member ensure that words are acted on with a resounding, “Here I am Lord, I’ve come to do your will”?

Several new resources are being developed to assist your council in enticing new members. It is essential that you take the time to evaluate what could be done in every council to offer them hospitality, a sense of belonging and empowerment. Our women hunger for these and they can only be acquired in the secure and nurturing atmosphere of the parish councils.

At this time of year, you will be evaluating new ways to recruit new members and actively pursuing methods of maintaining the membership you have. Many resources are already available, and I urge you to access these. For example, the *Handbook for Organization Chairpersons* (HOC) offers many excellent suggestions.

“For enlisting new members or renewing past memberships, personal contact is the most effective method. ASK THEM – one on one ...” (HOC)

Identify the needs of your members. What do they want to do? Consider providing activities that will enlighten members on the Synod on the Family: choose activities that will enrich all standing committees through this significant focus.

Plan a pro-active membership recruitment and maintenance campaign with a variety of techniques - a membership drive, church display, festival of activities, oral presentation by a member, spiritual advisor or visiting dignitary (life member, president from another level), bulletin announcement, insert or hand-out, personal mailing, or personal contact are great places to start. Provide special perks for members as they enter the church (prayer leaflets, bookmarks, magazines). This not only will promote education and enrichment for members but will elevate the profile of the League to other parishioners. Promote the League in a variety of different ways but always with affirmation and celebration. Remember, memberships are due January 1, 2015.

Careful planning will ensure rich rewards. It is the privilege and the right of every woman to belong to the League. But every woman must feel welcome, accepted, valued and affirmed. Can you do this with *One Heart, One Voice, One Mission*?



Margaret Ann Jacobs
National Chairperson of Organization