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## The CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE of CANADA

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# M E M O

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To: Parish Council Presidents  
CC: Diocesan Presidents, Provincial Presidents and Life Members  
From: Barbara Dowding, National President and Chairperson of International Relations  
Date: October 27, 2015

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Dear presidents,

Greetings and blessings to all of you! Whether you are a brand new president or returning for another term, I thank you for generously accepting this role.

Your leadership is critical, and I am very grateful that you have agreed to accept this wonderful opportunity to serve. As you know, we are living in troubled and turbulent times. There are many issues we need to pay attention to that are affecting Catholic women. You will find in this package information on doctor-assisted dying, euthanasia, refugees and the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, to name but a few. Please be sure to share this information not only with your parish council but with all Catholics.

During the 95<sup>th</sup> annual national convention, it came to light that spiritual advisors are anxious to help. They are seeking ways to assist and many are willing and open to speak about the League. I would like to suggest that you make an appointment to meet with your spiritual advisor when you receive this package. The issues needing attention are not restricted to parish council meetings but the parish, the larger church and Canadian society. Some spiritual advisors may not fully appreciate the scope of the League's service, and I think it would be either a good starting point or another opportunity to include him or her in your planning.

The convention was a success on many levels. First-time attendees numbered nearly 400! They left feeling inspired and excited as they discovered the scope, breadth and depth of this organization. I would venture to say they, and many others, were truly converted. Let us be sure our parish councils welcome these women, help them and inspire them to get more involved, and spread the League's good news.

When I read the annual reports, I see you are trying hard, and many of your councils are growing. Keeping in mind the single best way to grow your council is personal invitation, you might work with the theme *One Heart, One Voice, One Mission* to find ways to encounter

women in your parish. Then, you can begin practicing the “art of accompaniment,” as Pope Francis says. Meet other women where they are. Visit, have coffee, go for a walk or just talk. Walk with her a little and let her get to know you. I truly believe this is critical in today’s world. Like Mary and Elizabeth, just be present to the other.

If your parish council is struggling, ask your diocesan president for advice, a workshop or a visit. There is a wealth of wisdom and experience available. Invite members to share their good experiences—we all strive to have parish councils that are welcoming, hospitable and places where women want to be. I urge you to work as a team to ensure your sisters are welcome, and those who need a sanctuary will find a place with you. If you are blessed with a vibrant council, give thanks and keep up the good work!

At the recent World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, one of the key messages to building strong and healthy families was love. It is the same for us. The unconditional love of the neighbour brings mercy and compassion, eliminates loneliness and is our response to God’s call.

I pray daily for you and ask that you also pray for me. With *One Heart, One Voice, One Mission*, let us open wide the doors of welcome and love.



Barbara Dowding  
National President and Chairperson of International Relations