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The CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE of CANADA

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MEMO

To: Parish Council Past Presidents

CC: Parish, Diocesan and Provincial Presidents and Life Members (on request)

From: Barbara Dowding, National Past President and Chairperson of Laws

Date: October 31, 2016

Dear sisters,

This parish council mailing is a wonderful opportunity for me to greet and communicate directly with all parish council past presidents. Congratulations if you have just begun your term and thank you for having been president. If this is your second year, you could likely give the rest of us some guidance!

In either case I am happy to join your ranks and between us, we can offer support to the executive and members to the best of our ability. And we all know the importance of grassroots members! Without them, there would be no League as we know it.

"Past" has a slightly negative connotation in that it suggests something is over or gone. We have to remember it is the role of president that has come to an end but that is all! We are still alive and very well, I would hope and pray. Handing over the reins is a bit like giving the keys to the kingdom to someone else. One feels a little lost or left out, even powerless. But fear not, as you most likely already know, it passes quickly. Being a support and guide for the new president and her executive is your primary role.

Have you checked the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* section to review your job description and compare it to what is expected in your council? This helps to ensure basic national practices are followed, which is important if the League is to flourish at the parish level. Embracing new ways and new ideas is important and necessary for growth, and keeping ties with the diocesan level will ensure your members are on the right track.

As a grassroots organization committed to growing in holiness and serving the parish, we are always looking to develop leaders who will go on to the diocesan level and beyond. You may be asked to let your name stand for election at some point—pray and discern if that invitation is for you. In your parish, you are likely to be asked to chair the next nominations committee. Start now talking to women; encourage those with appropriate abilities to take that first step to consider serving on the parish executive. Do not wait until the last minute and possibly end up with few or no candidates.

The role of past president is a legitimate and important executive position. Do not underestimate it. Rather, embrace it wholeheartedly. Remember if you celebrate too loudly or happily that you are glad your term as president is over, you give the impression to others that being president is awful. Rest on your laurels by all means and breathe relief at having completed the job, but remember we want the new president to be happy about being elected, not shaking in fear.

As for me, I miss being in the thick of everything, but I am getting used to fewer e-mails and more time. I cannot wait for our first executive meeting in November and look forward to putting all this good advice into practice!

May Our Lady of Good Counsel guide you and the Holy Spirit inspire you as you continue in your service to the League.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Dowding". The script is cursive and elegant, with a prominent initial 'B'.

Barbara Dowding
National Past President