The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Spiritual Advisor Handbook

Revised 2022

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League Objects

The objects of the League shall be to unite Catholic women of Canada

1. to achieve individual and collective spiritual development
2. to promote the teachings of the Catholic church
3. to exemplify the Christian ideal in home and family life
4. to protect the sanctity of life
5. to enhance the role of women in church and society
6. to recognize the human dignity of all people everywhere
7. to uphold and defend Christian education and values in the modern world
8. to contribute to the understanding and growth of religious freedom, social justice, peace and harmony

Mission Statement

The Catholic Women's League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service.

Policy of The Catholic Women's League of Canada

The policy of the League shall be

1. to have membership and operation based on the parish unit, with diocesan, provincial and national representational levels
2. to operate on a system of standing committees and to make the fullest possible use of these committees in the involvement of all members
3. to develop leadership qualities and provide training to enable members to take active roles in the affairs of their faith, community and society
4. to maintain affiliation with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations
5. to cooperate at all levels with other organizations where and in whatever manner the council concerned agrees is necessary or desirable to accomplish the Objects of the League
6. to maintain liaison with parish pastoral councils in accordance with the *Code of Canon Law*
7. to remain politically non-partisan

Role of Spiritual Advisor

1. The spiritual advisor, in cooperation with the chairperson of faith, shall provide advice and guidance for the spiritual program.
2. The spiritual advisor shall receive due notice of all executive and council meetings and annual meetings of members/conventions and shall attend and participate in all such meetings, when possible, in an advisory capacity.
3. At national level, the spiritual advisor shall receive due notice of the national administrative committee meetings and shall attend and participate when possible.

Appointment

1. The spiritual advisor of the parish council shall be the pastor of the parish or whomever he shall designate.
2. A spiritual advisor may not serve simultaneously on any two levels above parish level.
3. A lapel pin will be presented to the spiritual advisor upon installation.

Term of Service

On levels other than parish, a spiritual advisor's term of office shall not exceed five years. The council concerned shall give six month's advance notice of the expiry of a spiritual advisor's term to the authority responsible for naming a successor (*Constitution & Bylaws*).

Voting Privileges

A spiritual advisor acts in an advisory capacity and does not have voting privileges.

Female Spiritual Advisors

Women may be appointed as spiritual advisors. Where a member is appointed as spiritual advisor, she must continue to pay her membership fees to maintain her years of service. However, during her tenure as spiritual advisor, she will not have voting privileges.

At Eucharistic celebrations, lay spiritual advisors participate as lay persons, not as clerics. Liturgical roles should not be confused with League roles.

Additional Guidelines

- Take an interest in the spiritual life of the members and the council by consulting with the president and chairperson of faith.
- Work closely with the chairperson of faith to give assistance with prayers/reflections at meetings.
- Celebrate the Eucharist or liturgies of the word and help plan programs for meetings and special occasions.
- Be familiar with spiritual resources offered by the League.
- Be familiar with the League's Mission Statement, "The Catholic Women's League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service."
- Promote membership drives and other projects by speaking positively to the parish about the League.
- Help the League to avoid conflict in dates with other parish events.
- Recognize the value of a League representative as a liaison on the pastoral council.
- Be familiar with League protocol for a deceased member: Eucharistic offering, honour guard, prayer service at the funeral home, luncheon, etc.
- Serve on the nomination and elections committee.

- Attend regional meetings and the annual meetings of members/convention at the next level whenever possible and participate with members.

Finances

At parish level, all financial projects shall be approved by the members of the council. The spiritual advisor must respect the financial autonomy of the League and remember that fundraising is not the main concern of the League.

Part XVII of the *Constitution & Bylaws* notes that while the spiritual advisor may be consulted on financial matters, final decisions are made by members.

Ceremonies

The League has several ceremonies that will involve the spiritual advisor.

Consult with chairperson of faith for the protocols related to these ceremonies, which include:

- Reception of New Members
- Installation or Affirmation of Catholic Women's League Officers
- Protocols for Funeral of Deceased Members
- Prayer Service for a Deceased Member
- Memorial Service for a Deceased Member
- Blessing of the *Book of Life*
- Installation of Spiritual Advisor
- Rite of Election of Officers

The Catholic Women's League of Canada Ecclesiastical History

The Catholic Women's League of Canada was:

- placed under the patronage of
    - Most Rev. Pietro di Maria, Apostolic Delegate to Canada and Newfoundland, 1922–28
    - Raymond-Marie Cardinal Rouleau and Most Rev. Andrea Cassulo, Apostolic Delegate to Canada and Newfoundland, 1929–31
    - Most Rev. Andrea Cassulo, 1932
    - J.M. Rodrique Cardinal Villeneuve and Most Rev. Andrew Cassulo, 1933–36
    - J.M. Rodrique Cardinal Villeneuve, 1937–46
    - James C. Cardinal McGuigan, 1947–74
    - mandated by the Canadian Catholic Conference of the Hierarchy, January 1, 1948
- granted the special patronage of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1976 and 1989
- recognized by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops as a lay association of women, 1992
- commended on numerous occasions by Sovereign Pontiffs, Pope Pius XI, Pope Pius XII, Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II
- recognized by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops as a national private association of the faithful, 2005

Our Lady of Good Counsel

In 1923, the League adopted Mary under the title of Our Lady of Counsel as its patroness. A painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel considered miraculous is found in an Augustinan church in the small Italian village of Gennazzano, some 30 miles from Rome.

The old sanctuary was given by Prince Colonna to the Augustinians in the 15th century, and the monks set about rebuilding their church. A wealthy woman, named Petruccia, came to their support in the restoration of the old church "Our Lady of Good Counsel."

People stood in wonder before its beauty! Mostly peasants, they were convinced it had come from paradise. They were reluctant to accept the story that the beautiful fresco had come from the walls of a church in Scutari, Albania. A recent discovery seems to confirm the Scutari origin. Restoration work done on the famous painting by Professor de Compos between 1957 and 1961 confirmed that the fresco was the work of Antonio Vivanini, a master of the Veronese school of art in the first half of the 15th century. This picture depicts the formative period of the master's work and was probably painted between 1437 and 1440.

The original picture of the mother and child is painted on light plaster, measuring 18 x 15 inches. The style is oriental and Byzantine and shows evidence of moving away from the stylized rigidity of the east. The original was brilliant and brightly coloured, the faces simple, pure, compassionate and devotional. The infant is so close to His mother that His simple and loving gesture draws us all to Mary, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

The feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel in the Canadian Liturgical Calendar as an optional memorial on April 26th with specific prayers in the Roman Missal.

The Crest

The crest and seal of the League is centred on the cross, exemplifying faith, set above 10 maple leaves, representing the provinces of Canada, with the words THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA – FOR GOD AND CANADA enclosed in an unbroken circle, symbolic of constant service. The colours of the crest are blue for the Virgin Mary and the papal colours of white and gold.

Structure

The Catholic Women's League of Canada was granted federal incorporation December 12, 1923. It does not have registered charitable status.

The League comprises 11 provincial councils—one for each of the 10 provinces, which includes the territories, and the 11th council being that of the Military Ordinariate, which was granted provincial status in 1965. The League is the largest national organization of Catholic women in Canada.

It is composed of councils at four levels: parish, diocesan, provincial and national. Each council has its own executive and its own spiritual advisor.

The League organizes its work through three main standing committees of faith, service and social justice.

- Faith Standing Committee: This committee focuses on issues related to prayer, sanctity of life and vocations. It also addresses the role of women in the church, ecumenical and interfaith topics and the study of Catholic teachings.
- Service Standing Committee: This committee promotes all activities that serve members and the good of the parish. In the wider community, the committee supports services that address issues such as homelessness, human trafficking, poverty, bullying and racism. This committee also educates members about charitable needs especially mission assistance at home and abroad.
- Social Justice Standing Committee: This committee's main roles are related to educating members, keeping members informed and leading members in advocacy efforts on social justice issues. The committee may also initiate resolutions on relevant issues as a means of taking further action within the League.