



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

MEMO

DATE: April 11, 2023
FROM: Cathy Bouchard, national chairperson of spiritual development
FOR: Parish chairpersons of spiritual development
THROUGH: Parish presidents and secretaries
CC: Diocesan and provincial presidents and secretaries and life members
(on request)

“The Catholic Women’s League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith... .” What does this look like? One of the recent documents from Pope Francis can guide members in growing in holiness. As a council, members can study his apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness in today’s world, *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

Pope Francis says, “To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.” He further notes that Catholics are called to be holy by:

- living out their commitment with joy
- loving and caring for their spouse, as Christ does for the church.
- labouring with integrity and skill in service of their brothers and sisters.
- patiently teaching children how to follow Jesus.
- working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.

Gaudete et Exsultate is a meditation on how to joyfully respond to Christ’s invitation to strive for holiness. The third chapter centres on the example of Jesus, particularly in an interpretation of the Beatitudes of Matthew 25. Pope Francis writes in Chapter 3, “Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy when he gave us the Beatitudes... The Beatitudes are like a Christian’s identity card. ...If anyone asks: ‘What must one do to be a good Christian?’, the answer is clear. We have to do, each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount. In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives.”

In Chapter 4, Pope Francis writes, “I will not pause to explain the means of sanctification already known to us: the various methods of prayer, the inestimable sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, the offering of personal sacrifices, different forms of devotion, spiritual direction, and many others as well. Here I will speak only of certain aspects of the call to holiness that I hope will prove especially meaningful.” He discusses five “great expressions of love for God and neighbour” that he takes to be “of particular importance in the light of certain dangers and limitations present” today.

One of these signs or spiritual attitudes of love for God and neighbour is that growth in holiness “is a journey in community, side by side with others.” Ideally, this is who members are, living in a community, as a Catholic Women’s League parish council. “Each community is called to create a ‘God-enlightened space in which to experience the hidden presence of the risen Lord.’...The common life, whether in the family, the parish, the religious community or any other, is made up of small everyday things... A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment, is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father’s plan.”

Pope Francis urges us to call on Mary’s intercession to help us walk with Jesus toward holiness. He concludes, “Let us ask the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us a fervent longing to be saints for God’s greater glory, and let us encourage one another in this effort. In this way, we will share a happiness that the world will not be able to take from us.”

The podcast “Abiding Together” has an excellent three-part study guide you may wish to use in your council. Visit abidingtogetherpodcast.com for Season 3, episodes 21-23.

May we continue to grow in faith with our sisters in the League. May we assist each other so that we may meet together with our God in heaven.