



Hamilton Diocesan Council
of
The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Inspired by the Spirit — Women Respond to God's Call



Pages: 3

October 2017

To: Council Presidents, Council Spiritual Development Standing Committee Chairpersons
From: Catherine Feren, Hamilton Diocese Spiritual Development Standing Committee Chairperson
cc: Diocesan Officers, Committee members

Dear Sisters in the League,

In response to requests from presidents and council officers regarding "what to do" for spiritual development in local council meetings this first directive will introduce my perspective and provide some concrete suggestions as to how to use a variety of resources.

The Objects of the Catholic Women's League of Canada are the guiding principles of the organization and are listed in the Constitution and Bylaws as follows:

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

We are told that these Objects are listed in no particular order. I like to believe that the first object, individual and collective spiritual development, is listed first because without it, the rest are meaningless. So...this is where we begin.

Often the recommended one third (1/3) part of council meetings devoted to spiritual development is reduced to a few minutes of prayer read by a member with others listening attentively. There is nothing inherently wrong with "reading prayers" and is sometimes completely appropriate based on the specific circumstances. The websites for our national and provincial organizations have a plethora of prayers for our use. You will find a whole section with resources specific to the current National theme: ***Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God's Call.***

You might be surprised to find skits, activities, collections of bible passages for deeper reflection and more comprehensive prayer services in those resource

sections as well. All for "spiritual development", and all prepared for the benefit of you and your council.

There is opportunity for more, so very much more.

Pope Francis has published three (3) excellent pieces, the encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, (Praise Be to You) and apostolic exhortations *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) and *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). They are made available for all Catholics to read, study and discuss and are specifically meant for "spiritual development". Group reading guides are available for all of them.

"Living Out *Laudato Si*: A Commentary and Practical Resource for Canadian Catholics" is a 30-page document, available online on the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops website. It is well organized into six parts which could easily be studied individually or as a group at meetings.

Did you know that a faith sharing guide was published by the Word Among Us in 2015 in anticipation of the Holy Year of Mercy? It contains reflections by Pope Francis and a step by step guide to exploring God's mercy and our call to mercy toward our brothers and sisters. It continues to be relevant and readily available. What wonderful opportunities to learn about current thought and direction in the Catholic Church directly from our Holy Father in the context of local council meetings!

Many current and classic books, from a variety of sources, are available and can be used for teaching and reflection, again in the context of council meetings and gatherings. And all for "spiritual development"! I have listed several of my favourites in the resources list below.

You might want to consider allocating one third (1/3) of meetings a year to spiritual development. You might also consider that every meeting, every gathering of Catholic Women's League members is a gathering for spiritual development. Our business program and social activities are not isolated from our spiritual calling. They are part and parcel of it.

Have you ever thought of lighting a candle at the beginning of each meeting? Doing so can signify the presence of God with us, in us and present in all we do. I have begun this practice at regional meetings and with my diocesan colleagues at our meetings.

I have included links to all the online documents I have mentioned in the resource list at the end of this directive. Please contact me for assistance and support at any time.

I look forward to continuing our journey of faith together.

And remember...we do what we do always for God and Canada!

Resources for Spiritual Development

Catholic Women's League National & Provincial Website Resources

<https://www.cwl.ca/prayer-corner/>

<http://cwl.on.ca/prayers>

<https://www.cwl.ca/inspired-by-the-spirit-2017-prayer-services-and-workshops-2/>

<https://www.cwl.ca/resources/programs-and-workshops/>

Women on a Mission - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-mKE4UQlcc>

Papal Documents

Laudato Si, (Praise Be To You) -

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel) -

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love) -

https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

Canadian Conference of Bishops (CCCB) Resources

Living Out Laudato Si -

www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Living_Out_Laudato_Si_En.pdf

Books

Faith & Freedom – Teresa Forcades

Rediscover Catholicism – Matthew Kelly

Do Monkeys Go To Heaven? – Finding God in All Creation – John McCarthy

Forgiveness – A Guide for Prayer – Jacqueline Syrup Bergan & S. Marie Schwan

Catholicism – A Journey to the Heart of the Faith – Robert Barron

Moment by Moment – A Retreat in Everyday Life – Carol Ann Smith & Eugene F. Merz

The Open Door – A Journey to the True Self – Joyce Rupp

Dialogues With Silence – Thomas Merton

Why Do Catholics Do That? - A Guide to the Teachings and Practices of the Catholic Church – Kevin Orlin Johnson

Issued: October 1, 2017