

The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Nova Scotia Provincial Council
Spiritual Development Annual Report 2019

Despite the fact that the online reporting system has become more efficient and easier to use than ever before, the average response rate is only 45%. We are failing in our attempt to convince parish councils that it is important to report their challenges and successes if we are to address such issues as declining membership and disconnect among the various levels of our organization.

The reporting chairpersons indicated that there is a variance on how this position is filled: 77% in one diocese are elected, 35% in the other. Most chairpersons are in the 64-74 age group, and most have served in this position previously. Despite this, all reporting chairpersons were enthusiastic about what is happening in their councils and are actively studying and holding events in connection with our theme, "Care for Our common Home".

More than half the reporting councils follow the practice of devoting 1/3 of meeting time to the spiritual aspect of membership. They organize a variety of liturgies and programs for their councils, have spiritual reflections and scripture reflections ready for meetings, honour their deceased members by participating in Prayer Services and Honour Guards, organize and attend seasonal events for members of their councils and parishioners, celebrate one day per month with continuous recitation of the Rosary in their churches, and support and hold World Day of Prayer Services. In summary, members of this committee are leaders in their parishes in adding to the spiritual life of parishioners.

Resources provided by the National Council on the website are regularly utilized by parish councils in developing their own liturgies and programs. In addition, resources recommended by the National Chairperson in her communiques are often sourced. The diocesan councils provide resources and hold retreats and spiritual growth events which enhance the spiritual development of members. Members enroll in lay formation programs, more so in the larger centres where they are more readily available. Councils in smaller, more remote areas should be encouraged to find programs which are online or seek out recorded programs which can be purchased and the cost shared with neighbouring councils. Diocesan councils may wish to establish lending libraries.

The Feast of Our Lady of Good Council is a special day in most councils, celebrated with special Masses, luncheons and other events.

Both Diocesan chairpersons reported that Spiritual Advisors attended meetings less than 50% of the time, with an unfortunate number reporting that their Spiritual Advisor never attends a meeting. In these circumstances the Council is missing out on two vital experiences: the ability to be uplifted and guided spiritually by the parish priest and a very real resource to market the League in the parish. Councils that report a close relationship with their spiritual advisor appear to have a stronger commitment from their members.

The members of the CWL continue to be leaders in parish life. They chair parish committees, are active on parish councils, finance committees and liturgy committees. They direct or sing in the choirs, clean, decorate, serve in all of the ministries. In reviewing the diocesan reports, it is clear that most if not all parishes would cease to function effectively without the involvement of the women of the CWL. Good work ladies!

Spiritual Development chairpersons in the parishes report that their biggest challenges are resourcing new and interesting presentations and getting members to participate. All chairpersons at different levels should provide parish council chairpersons with the information and resources to assist in making the spiritual component of membership interesting and rewarding to our members. A CWL meeting, more than any place other than Mass, should be a place where women have a chance to reflect upon their faith and enjoy a faith filled moment in an otherwise busy, noisy world. On a personal level, I am fortunate to belong to a council where clever, resourceful, committed women lead every meeting with a spiritual program which puts us in exactly the right frame of mind to deal efficiently with our business meeting and on to a cup of tea, a treat and a good natter!

Most councils reported that the online survey format was easy to navigate. Some councils remain "technology challenged", and some reported that most of the questions did not address issues in their small councils suggesting that there be room for a survey designed by and for councils with fewer than, for example 20, members.

The women of the CWL in Nova Scotia are strong and united in their faith and commitment. They are the pillars upon which the church stands. Every day we are grateful to our Lady of Good Counsel for her love and guidance as we continue in our service to the people of God.

Jessie Parkinson
Chair of Spiritual Development
Nova Scotia Provincial Council