

## **BRIEF: CWL Parish Council Spiritual Advisor – 2 – Current Councils & Advisors – 090818**

### **Continuation of the Brief: CWL Parish Council Spiritual Advisors**

In the main brief under this same title, we tried to address the organizational, procedural defect in establishing a new Pastor that is willing and able to also serve as Spiritual Advisor for the Council of the CWL in his Parish. The reflection, discussion, and ideas proposed in that brief are meant to address new appointments. In this continuation of the brief, we would like to address how we are doing in the current Parish Councils throughout the League and within our local Churches.

Those dioceses that for reasons of geography, demographics, history, and other variables are still vibrant communities providing the local population with a strong sense of belonging and identity, it is more likely that the CWL enjoys there a higher profile and greater support from the local Church as a matter of commonly held history and experience of community. Still, even there, it may be possible to find some parishes where the Pastor, established there for a longer or shorter period, for any number of reasons may not enjoy for his part such a good connection with the League or as expressed in its self understanding or in the understanding of the CWL Parish Council Executive and Members.

All the more reason, then, can we expect to find such imperfect connections in places where the local Church is not a natural community due to the alienating influences of the cosmopolitan setting of the modern city, the sheer size of the urban area, or the multicultural and multiethnic nature of its society. It can also be said that life is an uninterrupted series of imperfect connections, but that doesn't usually stop us from trying to improve how we connect with each other and with others in society.

What can be done about those parishes where the Pastor knows little about the League, may find it an annoying burden to be the object of expectations he finds it difficult to meet, may do his best to support the CWL Council in his Parish but may just not enjoy the happy complicity intended by the League and CCCB, or for any number of other reasons is simply unable or unwilling to serve as Spiritual Advisor?

In the original Brief, we quoted the League's policy for precisely such a situation. "The spiritual advisor of the parish council shall be the pastor of the parish. Where this is not possible, the pastor, in consultation with the council executive and the ordinary of the diocese, shall appoint a spiritual advisor." What do we do when this alternative solution is not implemented and that CWL Parish Council finds itself somewhat adrift? This is what we hope to address in this continuation.

### **Taking for granted good will all around, how do such things happen?**

When it comes to the formation and appointment of priests and pastors, we put our best efforts into the designing, assessment, and updating of our seminaries, and we do much to help priests enjoy continuing education. On the surface of it, though, when we appoint priests to their first assignments and their first pastorships, we often take for granted that they already have everything they need, that they will find what they don't have, and that all things will work out for good for those who love God.

Well, sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't. When young priests are surrounded by priests who know how to mentor the young and spontaneously take them under their wing or look in on them and drop little gems of advice at the appropriate moments, then these young men have someone to whom they can turn when they find themselves in awkward or unknown situations. These are more likely to survive the challenges of apprenticing as a priest today. Sadly, many young priests do not find themselves in such a blessed situation, and often feel they must fend for themselves. Some crash. We witness in too many places as many as half of priests ordained under 10 years leaving active ministry.

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We want so much to respect the freedom of priests that we too often leave them to their own devices, and some are better at finding their way through new situations than others. We are afraid of imposing on them and some priests feel abandoned and that no one cares whether they succeed or not or are happy or not. When the experience of a Pastor is that everyone wants more of him than he feels able to give and that few if any are offering to help, support, or love him; we should not be surprised that in such a setting we are unlikely to find a well disposed candidate for Spiritual Advisor for the Parish Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada.

In addition, there are any number of personality variables that may make it difficult if not even impossible for a Pastor to understand the League or women or to serve as Spiritual Advisor. For their part, parishioners in general and Members of the CWL in particular may have gotten a distorted view of the League as a bunch of women running bake sales and other fundraisers.

### **Where Do We Begin?**

As explained in the original Brief, it is a structural, procedural defect that the Pastor of a Parish with a CWL Council is not mandated deliberately as Parish Spiritual Advisor as Spiritual Advisors are at the other three levels. This requires a remedy that is in accord with the ways of the League and also with the ways of the local Church. Given that the Parish Council of the CWL is the fundamental point of belonging for its members where it is most crucial for the heart and spirit of the League to thrive and unfold, why not begin here? At the heart of the charism of the League is love of God lived out as love of the Church and in particular love of priests. In this "Year for Priests" what better way to prosper our love for priests than by raising the bar on the connections between our priests and the CWL?

If the League has never been inculturated into a particular local Church or if it was but this has been forgotten by some or unheard of by others, then there is a need among the priests for the ordinary to make explicit what I keep calling the happy complicity between the League and the local Church as intended by the founders of the CWL and successive National Executive Councils and by the CCCB Executive and Assembly going back to 1948 if not earlier.

Priests and laity have a right and a need to know that the League is not just another parish group, but a national organization with expressions at three other levels. They need to better know the League and its mission, purpose, objects, nature, policies, vitality, and activity at all those levels. Both Pastors and Members of the League need to experience the love of God that is intended to be the very breath of all activity in both the League and the Parish faith community, to be a blessing for each other and for the Parish within the context of the freedom and responsibility of all those involved.

Each Bishop, Pastor, CWL President at whatever level, Priest, and CWL Member at large can in their own setting and time better express their specific, personal, communal, and local experience of the relationship between the League and the local Church, or lack of it. I believe it is at each level and in every place that the needed remedies can be put into place, but that is already true, and we all know how we are at present doing in various places.

In order for us to see a marked improvement in the current state of affairs, even where things are already working well, some action needs to be jointly taken by the various officers of the League and various members of the hierarchy and clergy in Canada. How do we gently mobilize everyone? What would that action be, who would start, and what could be the occasion to do such a thing? I feel very hopeful in the presence, creativity, and power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, and sense it wouldn't take much to make a huge difference. We need to take precise, unified and confident action.

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### **90 Years of the CWL in Canada Celebrating the “Year for Priests”**

What if we took the opportunity of the year leading up to the next National Convention, marking the 90<sup>th</sup> year of the CWL in Canada, to celebrate our priests in this “**Year for Priests**” and raise the bar on awareness of the League as an opportunity and a gift from God to the Church? Such a thing would also have a beneficial impact on our quest for more vocations to the priesthood, also dear to our hearts.

*The CCCB – in collaboration with the National Spiritual Advisor*

- 1) In collaboration with the CWL generate a national call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace.
- 2) Publicize the CWL as a national organization of Catholic women active at provincial, diocesan, and parish levels and rooted in gospel values, calling its members to holiness through service to the People of God and love of God, his Church, and his priests in Our Lady of Good Counsel.
- 3) During this “**Year for Priests**” inaugurated by Pope Benedict XVI “on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Friday 19 June 2009”, it would be most opportune to put forth the role of CWL Spiritual Advisor and invite Pastors of all Parishes and in particular of all Parishes with a CWL Council to become aware of the high potential for the presence of the CWL and of the role of the CWL Spiritual Advisor to enrich their ministry as Pastors and sanctify their lives as Priests through shared experiences of love in action and the joy of mutual caring.
- 4) Call on all Bishops and Priests to support the League as a national organization and its presence and activity at all levels: in the Nation, in the Provinces and Territories, in the Dioceses, and in the Parishes, to welcome CWL initiatives to celebrate priests throughout this year, to seek a collaborative relationship with CWL officers and members in celebrating the priestly vocation, and to join in the promotion of the League within each Parish as beneficial to Catholic women, to each Parish, to the Church and society, to all women, and to vocations to the Priesthood.
- 5) Work with the League to distribute a package on the CWL, on Spiritual Advisors, and on the “**Year for Priests**” and invite Clergy to familiarize themselves with the League and collaborate with its Councils at the various levels in living out the blessing of this “**Year for Priests**”.
- 6) Clarify for all that at each level the CWL President and Executive have jurisdiction over the activity of their CWL Council and that clergy have jurisdiction over the life, activity, and mission of the Church at her various levels, and call clergy and laity alike to cultivate a collaborative relationship for the good of all in accord with God’s will and the call of Jesus.
- 7) Invite Bishops and Pastors to attend a regular CWL Convention at the various levels in order to get a better glimpse of the life and activity of the League as expressed in more intensive ways at conventions and to receive CWL initiatives to celebrate Priests in this “**Year for Priests**”.
- 8) Do whatever is necessary to make it easier for Pastors to attend CWL Conventions at all three levels as a form of continuing education, with attendant financial assistance.

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### *The CWL National Office – in collaboration with the National President*

- 9) With the CCCB generate a national call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace.
- 10) Help the CCCB publicize the CWL as a national organization of Catholic women active at provincial, diocesan, and parish levels rooted in gospel values, calling its members to holiness through service to the People of God and love of God, his Church, and his priests in Mary.
- 11) Support CCCB initiatives during this “**Year for Priests**” inaugurated by Pope Benedict XVI “on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Friday 19 June 2009”, and work with the CCCB on simple handouts on the League, the role of CWL Spiritual Advisor, and initiatives for the “**Year for Priests**”. Promote “**Year for Priests**” initiatives among all Members as a gift from God to enrich their League and Parish life and activity and sanctify their lives through shared experiences of love in action and the joy of mutual caring.
- 12) Call on all Councils to be ready to offer CWL Officers as speakers and witnesses to celebrate Priests and help Bishops and Priests to welcome the League as a national organization and to support its presence and activity at all levels: in the Nation, in the Provinces and Territories, in the Dioceses, and in the Parishes, to love and support Pastors and Priests, to collaborate with them, and to promote priestly vocations and the League within each Parish as a continuing gift from God and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace.
- 13) Collaborate with the CCCB to distribute a package on the CWL, on Spiritual Advisors, and on the “**Year for Priests**” and invite League Councils and Members to take initiatives to love and celebrate Spiritual Advisors and Priests at the various levels for this “**Year for Priests**”.
- 14) Work closely with the CCCB to clarify for all that the CWL President and Executive have jurisdiction over the activity of their CWL Council and that Clergy have jurisdiction over the life, activity, and mission of the Church, and call on Members to cultivate with Clergy a collaborative relationship for the good of all in accord with God’s will and the call of Jesus.
- 15) Help the CCCB invite Clergy to attend a regular CWL Convention at various levels in order to get a better glimpse of the life and activity of the League as expressed in more intensive ways at conventions and to receive CWL initiatives to celebrate Priests in this “**Year for Priests**”.
- 16) Collaborate with the CCCB and offer whatever is possible to support whatever is necessary to make it easier for Pastors to attend CWL Conventions at all three levels as a form of continuing education, with attendant financial assistance.

### *The Provincial Assembly of Bishops – in collaboration with the Provincial Spiritual Advisor*

- 17) Adapt as needed, and help the CCCB publicize and encourage widespread response to the national call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace.

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*The Provincial Council – in collaboration with the Provincial President*

- 18) Collaborate with the Provincial Assembly of Bishops to help publicize and encourage widespread response to the national call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace.

*The Ordinary and his Diocese – in collaboration with the Diocesan Spiritual Advisor*

- 19) Receive from the CCCB and disseminate to the parishes and priests, and encourage widespread response to the national call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace.

*The Diocesan Council – in collaboration with the Diocesan President*

- 20) Assist the Diocese to assure that all CWL Parish Councils and priests receive from the CCCB and actively respond to the national call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace.

*The Parish – in support of its Pastor, the Parish Spiritual Advisor*

- 21) Actively respond to the national call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace.

*The Parish Council – in support of the Parish President*

- 22) Assist the Pastor in assuring that the Parish CWL Council helps the Parish receive and actively respond to the national call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace

*Parishes without a CWL Council, Bishops and Priests not involved with the CWL, and women at large*

- 23) At every level Churches, Clergy, organizations and women may respond to the call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace, and seek more information at all points.

*CWL Councils at all levels and local Churches at all levels*

- 24) Be ready and welcoming, receive and respond to calls at every level from Churches, Clergy, organizations and women who respond to the call to celebrate our Priests and vocations to

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Priesthood and rediscover the League in its 90 years of partnership with the Church as a continuing gift from God in its members and opportunity for priests and women to collaborate in love and peace, and seek more information: by providing information, referring them to the appropriate Council of the CWL, inviting them to a local event sponsored by the local Church in collaboration with the local Council of the CWL, or simply put them in touch by providing contact information and websites for the CWL and CCCB.

### **Conclusion**

The Catholic Women's League of Canada is a remarkable grass roots membership organization within the Roman Catholic Church in Canada, and through it Catholic women also lend their voice to countless women without voices all over the world through representation on WUCWO – the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations – which enjoys official representation as an NGO at the United Nations Organization.

Anyone who understands the nature of the CWL and its place on the world stage and the good impact it has increasingly had within the Church and society in Canada these past almost 90 years is likely to draw the conclusion that all Catholic women in Canada should be paid members of the CWL and enjoy receiving its flagship publication "The League". Even without participate at meetings nor in any CWL activities women can accomplish so much simply by adding their voice to the CWL and to the women worldwide the CWL helps to empower through representation on WUCWO and at the UN.

In addition, Catholic women who would enjoy and draw satisfaction from helping out when they can, on occasion, would be able to do so more easily as members of their local Parish CWL Council, which would keep them informed through published minutes. At any time, those Catholic women who want more could get involved by attending meetings, and / or by participating regularly in the various activities carried out or sponsored by CWL Councils at various levels in the League. By doing so, they would enjoy an unparalleled opportunity to acquire experience and develop various leadership skills and enjoy the priceless satisfaction of, as Mother Teresa used to put it, "doing something beautiful for God by loving the neighbor."

Finally, Catholic women who are members of the CWL Parish Council have a wonderful and graced opportunity to be of loving and generous support to their Pastor and to enrich their Parish by their presence and involvement, for their own personal holiness and happiness, for the glory of God, the growth of the Church and the League, and for the good of Canada. What better way to celebrate 90 years of CWL life, activity, and loving collaboration with Clergy than for our nearly 100,000 women Members of the League to unite in love for our priests by celebrating this "**Year for Priests**"?

Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009      Dollard-des-Ormeaux, QC      Brief 2 submitted by

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