

Montreal Archdiocesan Council - Catholic Women's League

Homily – 2004 CWL Montreal Diocesan Convention Mass

Saturday, May 1st, 2004 at St. Ignatius Parish Church

Jesus calls us today to “Cast into the deep.” The Word of God hints that our times are times of death and life, times for solidarity and faith. The women and men of the Bible knew who they were, because they knew who God was and they knew what they had to do. Our Father has given us models to mentor us, to lead and guide us: Mary and Joseph, Our Lady of Good Counsel and Joseph the Worker, Patron of the Universal Church. They both cast out into the deep when they responded to God’s call to marry and to bear and raise God’s Only-Begotten Son. We need Mary and Joseph today more than ever before, because our times are also times of crisis. We are suffering a crisis of womanhood, and we are suffering a crisis of manhood. The deep water where we are to cast our nets is in the depths of human hearts, where struggles for life are going on – beginning with those closest to us, and extending to our neighbor.

We readily confess that we ourselves are taking too many cues from the marketing strategists, who appeal to our shallowest parts – to those caricatures of ourselves, of what it means to be a woman, what it means to be a man. Naturally, our children take their cues from us as well as from the media – they are a favored target group for marketers. We shape our children often through our inexperience – such is the lot of parents and of pastors – it is also their cross and our cross. Thankfully, the most important and influential thing we have ever done and will ever do is to love. We are the daughters and sons of God. We are the daughters and sons of love. Love is our vocation. It is how we become the woman, the man we are called to be and our Father intended us to be. As in Roman times, the culture of death is all around us, like a tide rolling in, like a flood overwhelming everything. It is right and good that we pile up sandbags and do all we can to minimize the devastation.

So we write letters, we submit drafts or amendments for legislation. We look for and distribute useful and inspiring texts and practical ideas to our members and to women at large. We find creative ways to support marriages and families and encourage children, youth, and young adults. We advocate for women, we reach out to women and walk along the roads of life with them. We defend life and promote vocation awareness, and we encourage youth and adults to respond to God’s will and remain faithful.

Through all these good works, we are casting the nets of the Gospel into the deep water in human hearts. We find ourselves among the widows as in Joppa around Tabitha, gathering at the bedside of the sick and the dying, appealing to God and his apostles for them. We also find ourselves at wedding banquets and other celebrations, taking our cues from Mary, eager to do “whatever He tells us.” Today, our hearts are full of praise and thanksgiving to God for his countless blessings. Our hands are full of the prayers and needs, the laughter and tears of our families, our friends, our CWL members, and our contemporaries.

Through the intercession of St. Joseph, we ask God our Father to renew the minds, hearts, souls, and bodies of men, youth, and boys today: that He restore in them the blessing of manhood as He intended them to receive it, accept it, and live it fully; that they may stand for something, rather than fall for anything. With Joseph, we put our trust in God’s help to renew our strength to go on casting into the deep, into the hearts of all our brothers in the Lord, from the youngest to the eldest.

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We resolve today to pray patiently that our Mother the Church may raise up for God once again – through our families and our churches – men who embrace the truth with humility; defend the dignity of women and the gift of life with integrity; protect the innocence of all our children fearlessly; contemplate and give witness to the God of truth, justice, and mercy courageously; and lay down their lives, devoting themselves to their wives and families tenderly. May God bless every boy to grow in wisdom and grace like Jesus and embrace fully his gift of manhood.

Through the intercession of Holy Mary, Mother of God, we ask God our Father to renew the minds, hearts, souls, and bodies of women, youth, and girls today: that He restore in them the blessing of womanhood as He intended them to receive it, embrace it, and live it fully; that they may find love by giving it away in purity of heart. With Mary, we put our trust in God's help to renew our strength to go on casting into the deep, into the hearts of all our sisters in the Lord, from the youngest to the eldest. We resolve today to pray patiently that our Mother the Church may raise up for God once again – through our families and our churches – women who gladly embrace the truth of God revealed in them: He has shared with them his power to give life. They already have all they need to receive life abundantly, to conceive with their husband and give life generously – even extravagantly – because they are already loved by God unconditionally and can afford to love fearlessly. The Father looks upon every girl, every woman, with love. They already possess the intelligence to know God and understand the complexities of life; they already have a heart with a limitless capacity to lovingly accept life and lovingly give life and nurture it; they already have a soul to contemplate the mysteries of God and celebrate the beauty of life; they already have a body marked with God's beauty enabling them to move about in the world of people and through their labor of love to bear abundant fruit of new life to enrich both Church and society. May God bless every girl to grow and embrace fully her gift of womanhood.

Dear sisters in the Lord, Jesus our Beloved comes to each of us today with fullness of truth and in intimate communion. He renews our strength like that of the eagle, that we may soar on the wings of the Spirit and not tire. He promised to remain with us every day until the end, and He is true to his promises. He will lead us as we cast our nets of his Good News into the deep water of the hearts of women and He will inspire us to walk with them along their roads. He will reveal his love for them through us. He will attract some of them to join us in our CWL quest.

Come, Holy Spirit, and fill us anew with the power of your love. Set us free from the many distractions of our time – enlighten us to change our lives to make room for the one thing necessary – to welcome your love and to attend with all the love we can muster to the people You send into our lives. Purify our hearts and strengthen our resolve to go without fear into the deep water in the hearts of women and men. Inspire us with creative ways of love and genuine interest and affection to approach all women – young and old, peaceful or troubled – and make ourselves a sister, a neighbor for them on the road. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus on the first Easter day, grant us to recognize Jesus walking there by our side, making our hearts and the hearts of our sisters burn with his truth and love as we walk side by side with them to encourage them on their road. Father, we ask You to answer this prayer, which we address to your Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, and which we offer You through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

Our Lady of Good Counsel, PRAY FOR US. St. Joseph the Worker, PRAY FOR US.

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