

**Inspired by the Spirit – Women Respond to God’s Call**  
200 Women Across Province and NWT  
45 Min. Talk

***“Called - But for What and How?”***

Your **MISSION STATEMENT** professes the following:

“The Catholic Women’s League of Canada is a national organization **ROOTED IN GOSPEL VALUES** calling its members to Holiness **through service to the people of God.**”

If there's one thing we can draw from COUNTLESS SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONS out there in the world, it's the fact that whatever they do, they always make sure that their activities can be rooted back to the Mission Statement that gave rise to their existence in the first place.

***“What is God calling you TO DO AS AN INDIVIDUAL embracing life in a parish through the Apostolate of the Catholic Women's League?”***

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Before we get into that, I'd be willing to bet that every single woman here is very familiar with the inner workings of their **PARISH SHENANIGANS**... No one walks through the front doors of the Catholic Church already deeply involved in the CWL – its more like – those who are already involved in the inner workings of their parish community, they then become **part of the movement**.

What that means for us is that right off the bat, **there's a lot of other things you could be doing with your lives and with your time**. There exist many other ways that you could use your GOD-GIVEN GIFTS to express your Faith and make a difference in people's lives – ***BUT*** – you’ve chosen this path...

And when you first began walking down the path of being a New CWL Member – ***with your heart filled with a sense of Joy in working for Jesus by BUILDING UP HIS KINGDOM through this organization***, it probably didn't take too long before the nostalgia of CWL and parish life evaporated into thin air and was replaced with what can sometimes be the harsh reality of being in the presence of a priest or priests with human limitations coupled with bumping into a community of CWL members, PARISH STAFF AND every day parishioners filled with human agendas, issues, and concerns...

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One day, a man walked up to an old hermit and said: ***“I’m SO disappointed with my Church and I’m looking for the perfect community.”***

The old hermit responded: ***“FOLLOW ME.”*** And so he led him down the hall, up the stairs and to the back and of the building. He opened up a door that revealed a **VERY SMALL PRIVATE CHAPEL** and said to him: ***“What do you see on these walls?”***

***“Well it’s full of moss and weeds – and it’s musty in here as well!”*** said the young man.

***“Amazing isn't it? and yet God DWELLS HERE... And so it is with your church community. It'll never be perfect or pure because IT'S MADE UP OF HUMAN BEINGS.***

***And you yourself are a human being – which means that if you were to find the perfect church community – at the very moment when you would become one of its members it would cease to be perfect...***

Now that we've laid out the fact that the very context within which the CWL exists is that of parish life and PARISH LIFE IS MESSY – cause it's a place and an environment that's on one hand **Human** by virtue of human beings being present while on the other hand: it is **Divine** by means of Heaven's Grace that permeates the members of the parish through the celebration of the **CHURCH'S SACRAMENTAL LIFE**.

And here you are – with **FULL KNOWLEDGE and UNDERSTANDING** that this IS the context within which you recall to exercise your ministry as a member of the Catholic Women's League.

And so “What is **IT** that God is calling you **TO DO** in a parish through the Apostolate of the Catholic Women's League?”

To discover some hardline answers, we're going to have to **STAY REAL CLOSE TO THE MISSION STATEMENT** and the first thing the Mission Statement stresses is: **“BE ROOTED IN GOSPEL VALUES...”**

To be honest with you, just that alone could easily be a Mission in and of itself for any human being on earth because the values of the gospel message are **meant to PERMEATE EVERY SINGLE DIMENSION OF OUR LIVES**. We become rooted in the Gospel when we allow for God's Grace to **TRANSFORM OUR NATURE**.

As St. Paul says to us in Colossians chapter 3 verse 10: **“We have to put on the New Self which is being RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE in the image of its Creator.”**

‘Being renewed in Knowledge of our Creator’ – while that happens on a sacramental level for us as Catholics, it's also another way of saying that **WE NEED TO BE CONSCIOUS OF EVERY DIMENSION THAT SURROUNDS US WHEN IT COMES TO LIVING LIFE ON EARTH**. And the one dimension that suffers most these days because of our constantly being plugged in through *smart phones, texting, Facebook, emails, and the list goes on and on*, is the dimension of the **Spiritual Realm**.

To be even more specific, we forget about the **PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS** that surround us and seek to help us **DISCOVER the will of God in the midst of Life's Busyness and Parish Madness**.

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I mean what if a **POLL consisting of two questions** was to be taken downtown Edmonton this afternoon that had a YES or NO option – and WHAT IF question number one was:

1. **“Do you believe that the Roman Catholic Church exists for the sole purpose of leading souls to heaven?”** While question number two consisted of
2. **“Do you believe in the existence of Angels watching over us and leading us to Heaven?”**

I'd be willing to bet that the majority of people would respond much more favorably to question number two than question number one. For according to a **CBS News Report in December 2011, polls showed that 8 out of 10 people believe in the existence of Angels**... The majority of people believe in the existence of the Angels, but are we living out that belief according to the gospel values we encounter in the Scriptures?

Or do we believe in the Angels existence much like we believe that there exists other solar systems in space? “Their there yeah but, so what???” Because that level of belief in the Angels is not what comes to us through the Gospels.

After all, Angels have been part of the creation story right from the get-go. At the fall of man, they were **charged with closing the Gates of the Earthly Paradise**, they protected Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

All throughout the Old Testament, we hear of Angels announcing births and calling forth great men and women to **TAKE UP A MISSION FROM GOD**. Isn't that why we're here today? To ask God how we are meant to respond to his call and for what as CWL members? Sounds to me like we are asking God to command some angels to bring forth an invitation for a Mission!

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It's IMPERATIVE that we keep at the forefront of our minds the fact that ***IT WAS AN ANGEL*** that presented Mary with the perfection of God's plan for her life, ***IT WAS AN ANGEL*** that appeared to Joseph in a dream so powerfully that upon waking, Joseph was convinced that Mary had been impregnated by the Holy Spirit and that ***she actually did carry the Son of God within her womb***. **Following that dream**, he lived out the rest of his life in accordance to **his belief**, his belief being that he had been visited by an Angel who showed him what PATH TO TAKE!!

**Why is that so important for us to pay attention to??**

Because we are part of a Generation that has **LOST THE SENSE OF 'AWE and WONDER.'**  
To live a life **ROOTED IN GOSPEL VALUES** means that we need to AWAKEN our levels of awareness – we have to TRUST that things are being presented to us in our every day ordinary circumstances that have the potential to become **'God Moments inspired by the Angels'**.

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Here's a story that comes to us from Rose...

***"I WAS BORN and RAISED CATHOLIC.*** I was baptized and received my first communion. For lots of reasons when I was a teenager I turned away from the church. I ran away from home got pregnant and married at a very young age. **I did lots of dumb and horrible things during my teenage years and young adult life.** For some reason I came out pretty much safely from every stupid choice and situation I had put myself in. After going through TWO RUINED MARRIAGES and **having two daughters whom I TAUGHT to live a very liberal and non-religious life style**, it all came to a point where my daughters were both heading in bad directions. I felt horrible for the way I raised my youngest daughter, she was treating me and her sister horribly: **drinking, doing drugs, flunking school.**

The people I worked with were RELIGIOUS and offered Bible readings for an hour before work for all those who wanted to attend. After a really bad experience with my youngest daughter, I began to beg God for forgiveness. Praying and asking him to help my family especially my daughters.

As I was crying I finally opened up my bible to a RANDOM PAGE and read: **"Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** (Matthew 7:17-19 17)

I was confused because of my ignorance of the Bible. I went to work that morning and one of my fellow co-workers, who also had been invited to bible study, **came in the office with bible in hand and quoted that very text of the bad tree not bearing good fruit**, he was saying it in a kinda joking **'Fire and Brimstone'** way.

He obviously did not know that ***I HAD READ THAT IN THE DEPTHS OF MY DESPAIR.***

When he said it, **I left my desk and went to the Ladies Room and SOBBED...** I don't really know if it was a coincidence, God trying to communicate with me or now that I am learning about Angels... **'WAS IT MY GUARDIAN ANGEL TRYING TO HELP ME?'** I know that Scripture is warning people about false prophets but at that moment, to me it meant that **I was a bad tree who was bearing bad fruit (my children) because of what I was teaching them.**

Since then I have had lots of strange "signs" when I am in despair and praying about something. **I am TRULY GRATEFUL to my Guardian Angel for LISTENING TO ME and ANSWERING ME in different ways...**

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I LOVE ROSE'S STORY because **it speaks of one awakening to the sense of 'AWE and WONDER' in life.** It speaks of one attributing her **hunches**, that come out of nowhere – which are so strong, **her premonitions, warnings, inspiration, ongoing guidance and direction** – all these things that we all experience on any given day, **Rose**, with the faith of a child attributes ALL THESE THINGS to the presence of the Angels working in her life.

Living a life rooted in gospel values means that we will adopt the examples we find of men and women live lives of deep faith before us and one of these attributes is that of being sensitive to the presence of **Messengers from God** dwelling among us whose sole purpose lies in illuminating before our souls **THE STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN.**

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**Pope John XXIII** had a deep personal devotion and familiarity with the Angels. With simplicity and naturalness, he once said:

**"Rely on your Guardian Angels, the lovable Heralds of our will. May the Angels, present in every home, speak of our desire to bring about social concord, good morals, the practice of Charity, Peace among nations."**

**In Pope John XXIII**, we have someone who lived a life **awakened to the spiritual sense of things.** Someone who knew that Earth is not separated from heaven in terms of space and time, for he understood that **Heaven is present on earth in the form of the SPIRITUAL PRESENCE of God's Beautiful Angels.**

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When we start living a life of faith which recognizes the Hand of God at work in our every day activities – whether those activities are at home or in the parish – then we are ready to embrace the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the CWL MISSION which is to **call its members to Holiness.**

Some of you might be wondering: ***"HOW CAN I CALL OTHERS INTO HOLINESS – I'm still trying to figure that out myself!"***

Here's the KEY to a flourishing CWL – it's not about looking for something to do that is INCREDIBLE, LIFE SHATTERING – some kind of a HUGE SPLASH. It's about doing all the little things that come to us on an everyday basis with Great Love and embracing a sensitive feel towards living in such a way that we will make a difference in someone's life.

But not just on the weekend when we go to church, it's about living this way in every circumstance we find ourselves engaged in: at home, at the parish, at CWL Events – it's a ***'way of being in the world'***.

We call others into Holiness when we meet them where they're at and touch their hearts with our words, our actions, our example... and most of the time, this is not some kind of planned event like a bake sale or an Italian Dinner, **most of the time it simply HAPPENS ON THE SPOT AND IN THE MOMENT!** Either we are present in a Christ-like way to others right here and right now or were not.

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**It was** a cold day in December, in NEW YORK CITY a few years ago: ***A little boy, about 10-years-old, was standing before a shoe store on the roadway, barefooted, peering through the window, and shivering with cold.***

A lady approached the young boy and said, **"My, but you're in such deep thought staring in that window!"**

'I was asking God to give me a pair of shoes,' was the boy's reply.

The lady took him by the hand, went into the store, and asked the clerk to get half a dozen pairs of socks for the boy. She then asked if he could give her a basin of water and a towel. He quickly brought them to her. **She took the little fellow to the back part of the store and, removing her gloves, knelt down, washed his little feet, and dried them with the towel.**

By this time, the clerk had returned with the socks. Placing a pair upon the boy's feet, *she purchased him a pair of shoes...* She tied up the remaining pairs of socks and *gave them to him...*

She patted him on the head and said, '**No doubt, you will be more comfortable now...**'

As she turned to go, the astonished kid caught her by the hand, and looking up into her face, **with tears in his eyes**, asked her: '**ARE YOU GOD'S WIFE?**'

Every day, GOD GIVES US SITUATIONS WHERE WE HAVE **CHOICES TO MAKE**: the tender compassion exemplified by this lady towards that little boy demonstrates for us someone who lives a life rooted in gospel values that bear fruit in the very moment within which she finds herself. That little boy will remember what happened to him on that cold December day for the rest of his life. **HIS ENCOUNTER WITH GOD'S WIFE will forever be a call to holiness at over the course of his own journey on earth.** We **call others to holiness** by bearing forth the fruit of Christ's love in their lives and we do that in the moment of now – when the chance to do so is **SUDDENLY THRUST UPON US.**

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A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR in Ontario once told the story of **what happened to a woman named Janice...** it was just a regular day in life as **Janice** was driving home when she suddenly found herself being stuck in a huge traffic jam because of an accident on the road ahead. We've all been there, and I'm sure were all going to experience it again at some point in the future.

The thing with Janice is this: UPON FINDING HERSELF BUMPER-TO-BUMPER with no end in sight: '***She prayed to the Lord asking that everyone would survive...***' **Two years later** a woman showed up at Janice's front door... she went on to tell Janice that during the accident but it happened two years earlier, she had been knocked out of her body – and while floating above the traffic jam **she saw everyone upset and grumbling** at the delay.

Everyone; EXCEPT FOR ONE CAR out from which a **WHITE BEAM OF LOVE** was emanating. She **memorized the license plate**, tracked Janice down and wanted to thank her for her prayer.

She thanked her for her prayer which she claims ***saved her life...***

Behold the POWER OF PRAYER poured forth from a heart **rooted in Gospel Values and embracing the moment of calling others to Holiness.**

How often do we get this opportunity? **Whenever an ambulance goes by with lights flashing and sirens ringing**: that's an opportunity *to pray for someone and their family*. **When were stuck in a traffic jam** because of an accident up ahead, that's an **opportunity like Janice** had to *intercede for someone and their family*.

Bishop Fulton Sheen once said: "**THERE ARE MILLIONS OF FAVORS HANGING FROM HEAVEN FROM SILKEN CORDS – PRAYER IS THE SWORD THAT WILL CUT THEM LOOSE.**" 2x

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That brings us to our third point within the CWL MISSION STATEMENT. The third point being that a CWL Member lives a life **ANCHORED WITHIN GOSPEL VALUES** which in turn, is meant to **INSPIRE YOU TO EMBRACE EVERY ENCOUNTER WITH OTHERS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CALL THEM TOWARDS HOLINESS** and that happens in a very specific way, (and that's point #3) **through SERVICE to the people of God."**

And for point number three, I want to set something before you that at first might seem a little jarring. The goal at hand here is to serve the people of God and yet, serving the people of God with the Proper Spirit and mindset will never happen unless **FIRST YOU HAVE DEVELOPED and NURTURED A DEEP LOVE FOR GOD!**

It goes back to the Greatest of Commandments: "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength**" that's number one because it's out of that experience that you will be filled with an overflowing sense of love which in turn seeks to fulfill our Lord's New Commandment: "**LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU!**"

**GOD IS LOVE** – that means we better be TAPPED INTO THE SOURCE OF LOVE if we wish to generate it in our world. It helps if we think of ourselves as being like a **water pump on a Fire Truck**. God is kind of like the FIRE HYDRANT out from which the full measure of love flows into this world. **We're like little fire trucks running around and people are in need of having the flames of Anger, Hurt, Suffering, Darkness, Depression, Sickness, Cancer, Old Age whatever it may be – the FLAMES OF OUR FALLEN NATURE** are BURNING THEM UP INSIDE – and then we show up on the scene of their life story!

Sure, we carry a certain amount of love inside of each of us much like a fire truck has 1000 gallons of water in it – **but if we're REALLY GOING to make a difference out there** – we're going to need a lot more than 1000 nice words and actions. We better be anchored and hooked up to the **FIRE HYDRANT OF LOVE** which is God because **ONLY OUR LOVE OF HIM AND OUR LOVE FOR HIM** will carry us through when the desert of life will seem to have sucked every ounce of water from our efforts.

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A successful BUSINESS OWNER was growing old and knew it was time to CHOOSE A SUCCESSOR to take over the business. Instead of choosing one of his Directors or his children, he decided to do something different. He called all the young Executives in his company together and said, "**It's time for me to step down and choose the next CEO. I've decided to choose one of you!**"

The young Executives were shocked, but the boss continued.

"I'm going to give **each one of you a package with a SEED today** – a very special SEED – each one unique from the other. I want you to plant the seed, water it, and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from the seed I have given you. **I will then judge the plants** that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next CEO."

One woman, named **MARY**, was there that day and she, **like the others, received her own seed**. It was the seed of a **FLOWERING MAPLE PLANT**! She went home and excitedly told her husband the story. He helped her get a pot, some soil and compost and **she planted the seed**.

Every day, she would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, **some of the other executives began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow**. MARY kept checking her seed, BUT NOTHING EVER GREW. Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by, still nothing. By now, others were talking about their plants, but MARY didn't have a plant and she was feeling like a failure.

Six months went by -- still nothing in Mary's pot. **She just knew she had killed her FLOWERING MAPLE SEED**. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but she had nothing. Mary didn't say anything to her colleagues, she just kept watering and fertilizing the soil - **SHE so wanted that seed to grow!!**

A year finally went by and all the young Executives of the company brought their plants to the CEO for inspection. At first Mary wasn't going to take in that empty pot, **I mean she felt sick to her stomach – it was going to be the most embarrassing moment of her life!!** But after talking it over with her husband, she decided that it was best to just be honest about the whole thing.

And so **she took the empty pot to the boardroom.** Upon walking in, she was amazed to see the variety of plants that have been grown by the other executives. THEY WERE HUGE AND BEAUTIFUL! All shapes and sizes...

Mary simply PUT HER EMPTY POT ON THE FLOOR while her colleagues began cracking jokes and laughing. But a few people in the room felt sorry for her.

When the CEO arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted his young executives. Mary just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the CEO.

"Today one of you will be appointed the next CEO!" All of a sudden, the CEO spotted Mary at the back of the room with her empty pot. He ordered the Financial Director to bring her to the front. **MARY WAS TERRIFIED.** She thought to herself, "*The CEO knows I'm a failure he's about to publicly humiliate me! Maybe he'll even have me fired!*"

When Mary got to the front, the CEO asked her what had happened to her seed - **SHE TOLD HIM THE STORY.** The CEO asked everyone to sit down except Mary...

He looked at Mary, and then announced to the young Executives:

**"Behold your next Chief Executive Officer! Her name is MARY!"**

Mary couldn't believe it – and neither could anyone else. "*How could she be the new CEO?*" the others asked while grumbling.

**Then the CEO said;**

"One year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But ***I GAVE each one of YOU BOILED SEEDS; they were dead*** - it was not possible for them to grow. All of you, except Mary, have brought me trees and plants and flowers.

When you found out that the seed wasn't growing, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. **Mary was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it.** Therefore, she is the one who will be the new Chief Executive Officer!"

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If you plant HONESTY, ***you will reap Trust,*** If you plant GOODNESS, ***you will reap Friends,*** If you plant HUMILITY, ***you will reap Greatness,*** If you plant PERSEVERANCE, ***you will reap Contentment,*** If you plant CONSIDERATION, ***you will reap Perspective,*** If you plant HARD WORK, ***you will reap Success,*** If you plant FORGIVENESS, ***you will reap Reconciliation...***

And if you **PLANT LOVE** in everything you do and with everyone you meet **you will reap the fulfillment of your MISSION STATEMENT** as CWL members:

"The Catholic Women's League of Canada is a national organization **ROOTED IN GOSPEL VALUES** calling its members to Holiness through service to the people of God."