

# THE 49<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS AND THE ARK OF THE NEW COVENANT



**Cecile Miller**

National Chairperson of Spiritual Development

The excitement is mounting! It is just over one year before the 49<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress will be held in Quebec! An International Eucharistic Congress is a gathering of the universal church, celebrating Jesus alive and present in the Eucharist, the source and summit of evangelization and centre of the life of the church. This is only the second International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Canada, the first being held in Montréal in 1910. Since Vatican II, the program of a Eucharistic congress has emphasized “catechesis,” a link between Eucharistic adoration and celebration and participation of the entire Christian people (“liturgy”), and the bond between the Eucharist and involvement in the world (“commitment”).

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In order for a Eucharistic congress to be fruitful, there must be spiritual preparation. For the first time in the history of international congresses, a religious symbol has been crafted in Canada, and it will help prepare the way for the congress. As with the World Youth Day Cross, this symbol, the Ark of the Covenant, will journey across Canada stopping in every diocese. The journey began in May 2006.

How can this ark be used for spiritual preparation? The ark itself symbolizes the life of Jesus and the new covenant that He instituted through His death and resurrection. Eight icons were chosen for reflection on the mystery of the covenant and can serve as the basis for Eucharistic catechesis. At the top of the Ark of the New Covenant, there are four large icons that represent the various moments in the Paschal Mystery or the Paschal Triduum:

- the Last Supper, commemorated on Holy Thursday
- the passion and death of Jesus, commemorated on Good Friday
- the vigil of Mary, celebrated on Holy Saturday
- the resurrection of Jesus, celebrated on Easter Sunday

The four smaller icons bring to mind various aspects of the Eucharist, the table of the new covenant:

- the multiplication of the loaves
- the wedding at Cana
- the washing of the feet
- the disciples at Emmaus

The design of the ark lends itself to various liturgical or other forms of prayer. It can be used to display the Book of the Word or a monstrance with the Real Presence for Eucharistic Adoration. It also contains the texts of the Old Testament and the New Testament. These texts are the presence of God who instructs us, the people, His church, through His word.

To integrate the last objective of international congresses, the ark is designed to hold the commitment forms of the faithful, who will be invited to sign a “Eucharistic charter.”

It is the hope of the organizing committee that the passage of the ark will help people reflect even more deeply on the six presences where the resurrected Christ is recognized and still living among us, so that they may say, as Thomas did, “My Lord and God!” These places of presence are:

- the coming together of the community
- the Word of Life
- the ordained minister
- the bread and the wine
- God’s presence in brothers and sisters as a sign of human solidarity
- the believer as a sign of God’s presence among his/her brothers and sisters

Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), reminds us that, “A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.” Eucharistic commitment is one of the suggested activities in the *Ark of the New Covenant Guide* because the Eucharist and the church’s mission are forever intertwined.

Each person who visits the ark on its journey is invited to make a commitment. Suggestions for the commitment are based on the six places of presence and can be found in the guide.

This is just a small overview of the purpose of the Ark of the New Covenant. To learn more, either visit the website [www.cei2008.ca](http://www.cei2008.ca) or get in touch with your diocesan delegate or any member of the committee in your diocese.

This is a very exciting time in Canadian church history. Members can spend time between now and June 2008 learning more about the Eucharist and how this great gift can enrich their lives.

What are some practical things members can do?

- Pray. Pray. Pray – for the organizing committee, the volunteers, the people who will be attending, the success of the congress, conversion for ourselves and all those who will be touched by the passage of the ark, preparation for and/or participation in the congress and/or coverage of the event.
- Learn more about the Eucharist.
- Promote awareness of the congress.
- Promote and help with the visit of the ark to your area.
- Volunteer to help on any committee.
- Make plans to attend. Registration should have started in January 2007. If unable to attend, support those who can.
- Donate to the two collections which will take place across Canada on the Feast of Corpus Christi (Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ) on June 10, 2007 and May 25, 2008.
- Support the temporary national voluntary fund set up for the congress at the 86<sup>th</sup> annual national convention in Halifax in August 2006.



The itinerary for the Ark of the New Covenant is as follows:

- January 15 to April 25, 2007 – Ontario
- April 27 to August 31, 2007 – Western Canada
- September to December 2007 – Atlantic Canada
- January to March 2008 – Northern Canada

Some of the itinerary is in more detail on the website, but many details have yet to be posted.

What will you do to prepare for the 49<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress in your diocese, parish, council and home? †

## COMMUNICATING OVER TIME

**Velma Harasen**  
National First Vice-President and Chairperson of Communications

**T**he *Canadian League* has been published for 85 years! Over those many years, the magazine has seen many changes, including its overall size and number of issues per year. During its long history, *The Canadian League* has continued to keep members informed and has provided a powerful communications tool. We thank the women of vision who saw the worth of such a magazine and all who continue to contribute articles. We strive to provide the best possible product!

I'd like to draw a parallel between communication and our new theme, *Love One Another*. You can't *Love One Another* if you don't communicate! Communication can take many forms; it can be a touch, hug, telephone call, smile, word of affirmation, helping hand to someone in need, or a batch of cookies for a neighbour. Pope Benedict XVI, in his first encyclical *Deus*

*Caritas Est* (God is Love), states that love of neighbour then becomes "...in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God.... I... look on... this other person... from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend.... I can give [others] the look of love which they crave." That's communication!

I challenge each of you to make a concerted effort to communicate with others in your council and parish. Phone someone periodically, League member or not. Try calling someone you normally wouldn't, someone who wouldn't expect your call but perhaps is lonely and would welcome a friendly, "How are you?" You might offer someone a ride to mass or to the next meeting. You are thus communicating as well as acting on the theme to *Love One Another*! †

