



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

MEMO

DATE: November 30, 2024
FROM: Glenda Carson, National Chairperson of Social Justice
TO: Provincial Chairpersons of Social Justice
THROUGH: Provincial Presidents and Secretaries
CC: National Executive (for information)
National Life Member Liaison
Re: Social Justice and Catholic Social Teaching: A Call to Action

“If we remain stuck in our blindness, we will continuously fail to grasp the urgency of giving a pastoral response to the many problems of our world” (Pope Francis).

At the 2024 annual national convention in Saskatoon, members approached me about the social justice standing committee, specifically asking why the League focuses so much on resolutions rather than broader social justice issues. While resolutions are essential, reflecting members' voices and guiding the League's direction, they represent only one aspect of advocacy. The question is a good one—social justice, in its fullness, needs to be understood and actively pursued by all members.

Since Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the church has emphasized human rights, economic justice and care for creation, including the following Catholic social teaching (CST) principles which guide meaningful social justice action for Catholics:

- **Dignity of the Human Person:** Every person deserves respect, dignity and the right to life. Catholics must consider whether society's actions respect or harm human life.
- **Rights and Responsibilities:** Catholics must protect fundamental human rights, including access to food, shelter and safety.
- **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:** Prioritizing the needs of those marginalized and vulnerable to societal pressure and power is essential to justice.
- **Dignity of Work and Workers' Rights:** All workers deserve fair wages, productive work, opportunities for growth and conscience rights.
- **Solidarity:** Catholics are called to care for each other as members of the global human family.

- **Care for Creation:** The environment is a gift from God, entrusted to people to protect all life and future generations.

So, how should members and chairpersons of social justice respond? For all members, engaging with these values means witnessing Christ's love through justice and mercy. The League has a unique role in advancing social justice that reflects CST. Beyond just adopting resolutions, the League aims for tangible impact through action. Members can be part of the forces for positive change in their communities and beyond. Here are ways members can lead:

- **Educate and raise awareness:** Organize events, study groups and workshops to deepen understanding of CST and social justice and inspire community action.
- **Advocate for policy change:** The League has a strong tradition of advocating for legislation and policies that promote dignity and justice. Members can address poverty, environmental care and fair immigration by contacting government representatives and supporting petitions and other advocacy campaigns.
- **Build partnerships:** Collaborate with religious and secular groups that share social justice goals, such as the interfaith support for palliative care at the Symposium on Palliative Care in Toronto in May 2024.
- **Promote environmental stewardship:** Inspired by *Laudato si'*, members can advocate for sustainable community practices, reflecting the call to care for creation.

A Call to Action

In his homily at the Synod of Bishops' closing Mass in October 2024, Pope Francis reflected on the healing of blind Bartimaeus in the Gospel of Mark, noting that "many things along the way can make us blind, unprepared to face reality, unable to respond to those who cry out to us." He emphasized the need for a "missionary Church" that walks with the Lord, attentive to the needs and calls of others. As Bartimaeus was encouraged to "Take heart; get up, he is calling you," members too are called to respond to the world's cries for social justice.

The League stands on a foundation of faith, service and commitment to social justice. By embracing CST and actively working toward social justice, members bring the gospel to life, championing dignity, compassion and equality for all. Our mission goes beyond social gathering; it is a call to walk with Christ, addressing the societal needs of our time.

Let us truly embrace and live the message of the national theme: *Here I am, Lord, send me!*