



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

MEMO

DATE: March 26, 2020

FROM: Fran Lucas, national president-elect and chairperson of organization

TO: Parish council chairpersons of organization

CC: Parish council presidents, diocesan presidents, provincial presidents and life members (on request)

There is no provincial council immune to having parish councils struggling to fill positions. A vaccine for that immunity has not yet been discovered, but one council has found an antidote. The exact remedy shared by now Town President Toni Lush of St. Nicholas Town Council is below. It was a makeshift solution that turned into a blessing.

Our council at St. Nicholas Parish in Langley, British Columbia, was starting our fourth year in 2018 and looking for volunteers for our third executive committee. We managed to fill the president, secretary, treasurer and membership (organization)—as well as having an enthusiastic past president. However, no one would volunteer for the spiritual development chair, which is a critical position.

Our small executive determined that the problem was that sisters might be reluctant to commit to a two-year term. Our solution was to ask at our next general meeting if any sisters would volunteer to make only one presentation and we could have presentations by several members over the course of the year. We were amazed by the response. Five members immediately volunteered to take on one of the next five months. We are now booked up into March of the second year!

The feedback from everyone at our meetings is extremely positive. Our past president, Liz Ard, writes, 'We can all benefit from other's *faith* experiences, their perception of the effectiveness of prayer, and their knowledge of God and their spirituality... This helps us relate... and also gives affirmation to our Sisters that we walk this journey together.'

Sisters are always presenting a topic that is dear to their heart. Everyone is truly engaged, the offerings are so diverse and interesting—and, as a bonus, women who thought they'd never take this on are willing to give it a try.

So far, the presentations have included guest speakers, book reviews, Serra Club, beatification ceremony in Mexico, mindfulness and prayer. Some specifics:

- An explanation of the ‘O antiphons’—complete with quiet chant music and handouts.
- A marvelous ‘Spiritual Adoption’ presentation— which we organized into a parish-wide initiative. We have over 100 unborn children in the care of parishioners. We send out monthly notices about baby’s development and a ‘thank you’ for the prayers.
- Guest speaker from Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform—again promoting the sanctity of life.
- A very thought-provoking presentation on Edward Sri’s book *Who am I to Judge? Responding to Relativism with Logic and Love*, which led to some personal questions— even ‘Am I guilty of relativism?’
- Facets and styles of prayer—short but enlightening and some tips for including ‘spur of the moment’ prayers. Do you say a Hail Mary when you hear the ambulance siren? How do you finish off with a prayer when someone takes the Lord’s Name in vain?

This makeshift solution has become a true blessing. More members are involved, not just depending on the executive. The commitment is taken so seriously—some members spend hours preparing for their presentation. As president, I have been blown away by the quality and diversity of the presentations. I am not alone in that, as evidenced by the feedback I’ve received and the continuing responsiveness of members to volunteer for one month. Some are even looking forward to a second presentation. Not every executive position could be managed in this manner, but for Spiritual Development, it is working very well for us.

Some may feel that not every executive position can be managed this way—and they may be correct. But could councils try? Thinking out of the proverbial “box” has led St. Nicholas’ Parish Council to fill a need. I challenge councils to do the same and share your success. If there is an honorary life member or life member in your council, ask them for help at any time, for anything. Across Canada, there are nearly 350 honorary life and life members who can be a ready source of guidance and support.

By now, parish councils will have completed their annual report surveys. Bask in the delight of all that members have accomplished! Regardless if this means two endeavours or 22, be proud. Then, have a critical look at where the council may wish to expand its horizons and take on one more meaningful action this year. Feel free to drop something else if needed. Do what members feel rewarded being a part of!