

Oral Report to 102nd Annual National Convention
National Chairperson of Education and Health Margaret Schwab

The last two years wreaked havoc on healthcare around the world. Anxiety and frustration increased the use of medical assistance in dying, making it more important than ever to promote good palliative care. This May saw the second annual webinar on palliative care with presenter Dr. Margaret Cottle who spoke on “Dignity Conserving Care: practical ways to accompany one another in faith, hope and love”. Dr. Cottle eloquently reminded attendees that caring is better than killing. The webinar is available on the national website.

Last November, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) released Horizons of Hope: A toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care. It may be found on the CCCB website. Because of the need for good palliative care resources, last August at the national annual meeting of members, a motion was adopted to create a temporary national voluntary fund to collect donations to offset some of the toolkit costs. Members supported this fund with donations of \$2,129.97.

Members once again embraced the opportunity to make use of the 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care kit. Prayer is an important part of what members do. We must pray unceasingly for access to good palliative care for all.

In June, the national bursary committee met to review the 11 applications received. \$7,900 was awarded to candidates to assist in the areas of personal spiritual growth, palliative care training, leadership and family therapy. The national bursary fund was generously supported by the membership with donations in 2021 of \$13,485 at a time when many parish councils were not meeting or able to fundraise. Their donations are received with gratitude.

Coady International Institute was supported through a national voluntary fund. From July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022, \$13,051.15 was collected from members and councils. The League has a close relationship with Coady, which provides relevant programs that help graduates make a positive difference in their own communities.

Canadian Blood Services reminds us that blood is needed badly. Any healthy person over the age of 17 can donate. The League has a partnership with Canadian Blood Services. The blood donations of members, family and friends can all count toward the partnership.

As I complete my first year as national chairperson, I must say “education” was the key word. There were many learning opportunities and I dare say, there will be more to come. I was able to meet with some of my provincial counterparts virtually, which was a great experience. I look forward to year two.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Ontario Provincial Council for the gift of the resolution titled National Strategy to Address Loneliness. The resolution urged the federal government to develop a national strategy addressing the negative impact of isolation and loneliness on individuals through policy making and program delivery. This topic was timely given the health risks associated with loneliness and social isolation and because of the extended isolation necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the close link between loneliness and mental health, and because the *Canada Health Act* assigns health care services to the provincial and territorial governments, the national executive felt that this resolution merited particular attention through awareness and action by this standing committee.