**The Catholic Women’s League of Canada**

**PowerPoint Presentation to Clergy (Script)**

* **Suggestion**: The presentation should be read aloud by two persons, alternating at each slide, for a contrast of voice and to sustain the audience’s interest.
* **Note**: Many of the slides are tiered. For each yellow highlighted area in this presentation (actual slide or within the script), please click the mouse to advance the information that will appear on the slide or to move to the next slide.
* The presentation is less than 2,500 words. Allow 20 minutes for presentation with PowerPoint, with 5-10 minutes for questions and answers.
* This presentation and the accompanying PowerPoint are in Word format to allow for easy editing and adaptability to the particular needs of each council.

**Slide 1** Good day. Thank you for making time on today’s agenda for a presentation about The Catholic Women’s League of Canada. I am *insert name and title*,and accompanying me is *insert name and title* of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada.

We are here on the recommendation of *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*, who suggested our best opportunity to promote the League was to make presentations at the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We hope our presentation will affirm and refresh those among you who have a council in your parish. Many pastors do not know what the League is about or realize it is a national organization. Thank you for making time in your day for our presentation. There will be an opportunity to ask questions at the conclusion of the presentation.

**Slide 2** A brief history of the League is in order. Papal encyclicals were instrumental in the founding of a national organization for Catholic women in England in 1906.A non-political organization for the formation of religious and intellectual interests was formed as a response to the call for Catholic lay action and to address the severe socio-economic needs of the working classes in Britain.

Word spread across the Atlantic, andin 1910, at the Eucharistic Congress in Montreal, Cardinal Francis Bourne of Westminster called for all English-speaking Catholic women of Canada to join into one union and to affiliate with similar groups forming in England and other European countries.

In 1912, Bishop Emile Legal recognized the need for organized assistance for immigrant women, which led to a group being formed in Edmonton called the Catholic Women’s League, with objectives to provide protection and support to women and girls, especially immigrants. Similar Catholic women’s groups in Canada were forming in the major cities of Montreal (1917), Toronto (1918), and Halifax (1919), with each group functioning in its own parish or diocese.

In 1918, all nationally organized groups were called to Ottawa to share their opinions with the federal government about the settling of immigrants flocking to Canada. However, there was no national organization of Catholic women represented. Bellelle Guerin, President of the Catholic Women’s Club of Montreal, subsequently met with the federal minister and was inspired to push for such a national organization.

**Slide 3** Invitations were sent to cities throughout Canada where the League was established locally. The first conference was held in Montreal, and on June 17, 1920, The Catholic Women’s League of Canada was founded and placed under the patronage of the Canadian hierarchy. More than 100 councils were organized within the first year by women travelling across the vast country by train, visiting small and large centres in every diocese, inspired by the motto, “For God and Canada.”

**Slide 4** Since its founding more than 100 years ago, The Catholic Women’s League of Canada has been placed under the patronageof various apostolic delegates and cardinals. In 1976 and 1989, it was granted the special patronage of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB). In 1992, the League was recognized by the CCCB as a lay association of women. In 2005, the League was recognized by the CCCB as a national private association of the faithful. On numerous occasions, the League has been commended, most notably by popes: Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II and Francis.

**Slide 5** The Catholic Women’s League of Canada is comprised of 11 provincial councils—one for each of the 10 provinces (which include the territories), and the 11th council is the Military Ordinariate. The League’s national membership is more than 63,000 members, and it is a registered not-for-profit membership association. The League has received the commendation and keen appreciation of federal, provincial and municipal authorities for the voluntary services ably performed by its members.

How many here have an active CWL council in their parish? *Pause for a show of hands.*

What is the League all about? In what ways can a parish benefit by having women organized as members of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada?

**Slide 6** The Catholic Women’s League of Canada is best described as a national organization that calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service. Its motto, “For God and Canada,” is realized through the Objects of the League, which are to unite Catholic women of Canada: *Each presenter alternates to read the bulleted points below; emphasize each verb.*

* **to achieve** individual and collective spiritual development
* **to promote** the teachings of the Catholic church
* **to exemplify** the Christian ideal in home and family life
* **to protect** the sanctity of human life
* **to enhance** the role of women in church and society
* **to recognize** the human dignity of all people everywhere
* **to uphold** and defend Christian education and values in the modern world
* **to contribute** to the understanding and growth of religious freedom, social justice, peace and harmony

**Slide 7** To realize its mission and live out its Objects, the League has these principal ministries:

* **to plan**, develop and coordinate programs directed toward the individual and collective spiritual development of members as envisioned by the documents of Vatican II
* **to encourage** and support the development of Christian values and, in particular, the image of the family throughout society

**Slide 8**

* **to represent** Catholic women and their views on topics of national interest and importance and to communicate those views to the church, government and society at large
* **to plan**. direct and coordinate the work of Catholic women in support of religious, charitable and community activities
* **to provide** a vehicle for communication and the development of Christian companionship among Catholic women everywhere

**Slide 9** Women of the parish organize as a council, with monthly meetings that endeavour through the spiritual development program to foster and advance the spiritual growth of members. Under the guidance of a spiritual advisor (usually the pastor of the parish) and in cooperation with the chairperson of faith, the spiritual program of a council is to express the religious renewal of the people of God as envisioned by documents of Vatican II. All councils honour, in a special way, Our Lady of Good Counsel, the League’s patroness.

The League is a private association of the Christian faithful in the church. Councils freely administer the goods they possess and choose their spiritual advisor, who must be confirmed by the local ordinary. The Catholic Women’s League of Canada has been officially affiliated with the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organisations (WUCWO) since 1921.

**Slide 10** Membership in the League is established and maintained by payment of an annual fee through a local parish council. Representation to the next level of the League is through the council president. Parish councils report to their respective diocesan councils, with diocesan councils reporting to their provincial council and provincial councils reporting to the national council. The League is directed by its *Constitution & Bylaws*, and its official language is English.

**Slide 11** Parish councils in the League operate through an elected executive that meets monthly, consisting of officers (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and past president) and chairpersons of the faith, service and social justice standing committees. The elected executives of the diocesan, provincial and national councils meet two to three times per year. Each level is required to meet in convention annually with representation specified by the *Constitution & Bylaws* of the organization.

**Slide 12** The Catholic Women’s League of Canada is committed to remaining politically non-partisan. Members draw attention to government about concerns through formal resolutions that ask elected officials to take a specified action. These resolutions may originate at the parish level and if adopted at the diocesan and provincial level, become the basis to approach municipal or provincial government about the issue of the resolution. If a resolution is directed to and adopted at the national level, the national council is tasked with approaching the federal government. In addition to resolutions, members participate in advocacy through letter writing campaigns and signing petitions.

**Slide 13** At the 2018 national convention, as a result of extensive consultations with members and strategic planning through a consultant, the League committed to restructuring and revitalization. The result was to formally adopt a five-year plan for implementation through to 2024.

**Slide 14** Guided by its core values of faith, service and social justice, and its core purpose of uniting Catholic women to grow in faith and to promote social justice through service to the church, Canada and the world, the League adopted a revised Mission Statement: The Catholic Women’s League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service.

**Slide 15** To address the concerns and critical issues of members, the League set goals and objectives arrived at through its extensive consultation.

**Goal 1: Members of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada grow in faith by sharing, witnessing, and developing leadership skills to create positive change**. This will be realized though increased opportunities for spiritual development, increased membership, increased flexibility throughout the organization, increased capacity and efficiency of leadership and their readiness to hold office as well as increased effectiveness of communication. In other words, the League is committed to the spiritual development of members as its core objective. However, the aim is to make leadership and holding office more flexible and do-able.

**Slide 16** **Goal 2**: **The Catholic Women’s League of Canada addresses and supports Catholic social teaching through advocacy**. This will be realized by increasing members’ knowledge of Catholic social teaching, training more members to lead advocacy efforts, and increasing collaboration with faith organizations and governments.

**Slide 17** **Goal 3:** **Through outreach and service, members of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada foster a culture where all life is valued with dignity and respect**. This will be realized by increasing participation of diverse cultural and generational groups, increasing awareness and opportunities for parish-based projects that protect and respect all human life, and increasing a sense of belonging and connectedness within the organization.

**Slide 18** Year 2024 should see the completion of the implementation of the strategic plan. It is hoped that the League will be re-energized with newer and younger members. It is hoped that the organization will be recognized as an inclusive and engaged community of Catholic women inspired by faith and that it still is:

* A vital participant in the church
* A valued partner for social justice
* A respected advocate at all government levels
* Connected to the world

**Slide 19** The League has officially transitioned its membership into the digital age where communication is done primarily through email. Members are connected and remain current of League developments through the national website as well as individual provincial, diocesan and parish councilswebsites and other social media.

**Slide 20** Members of the League see their participation in the League as an extension of their faith. We aspire that others would be attracted to join the League to experience growth in their faith, and a connectedness to the life of the church. We aspire to better reflect the cultural diversity of our parishes through membership. We desire for all women to experience and benefit from the sisterhood of the League!

**Slide 21** When we think of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada, we are reminded of the words of Saint Boniface, “In her voyage across the ocean of the world, the Church is like a great ship being pounded by the waves of life’s different stresses. Our duty is not to abandon ship, but to keep her on her course.” Our envisioned future of the League relies on faith, hope and prayer. Its future is dependent on the involvement of women in parishes, and the collaboration and support that members receive from their spiritual advisors, the pastors of the parish. Are you interested and prepared to share the journey of the League’s next 100 years with us?

**Slide 22** Thank you for sharing your time to hear our presentation. Do you have any questions? Comments?