



December 2021

Transitional Executive

President: Maryse Ristuccia
Secretary: Celestine Hall
Treasurer:
Spiritual Development:
Community/Family Life: Jenni Commanda
Dorothy Currie
Education: Corinne Santianni
Health: Krysia Theriault
Geri Crisci
Communications: Carmen Vanderreest

Contact information for the executives can be found at the end of this newsletter.

CWL Websites

National: www.cwl.ca
Provincial: www.cwl.on.ca
Diocesan: www.cwltoronto.ca

The Catholic Women's League of Canada (CWL) is a sisterhood, rooted in Gospel values that, "Calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service". The CWL is guided by its motto "For God and Canada".

Patroness of the CWL is Our Lady of Good Counsel whose feast day is April 26th.

Parish Website

<https://stjohnsto.archtoronto.org>

This is the new website for all matters relating to our church. Use it to register for Masses and Confessions (after 11:00 a.m. each Tuesday). It has links to the weekly Bulletin and many other great resources for our parish as well as for the Archdiocese.

Parish YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8pLWrdARlezRMzjHZJv9aQ>

Use this link to view all videos posted by our church including Sunday Masses. Be sure to "like" the channel!

Next Meeting

We are resuming meetings via Zoom due to pandemic restrictions. Our next meeting will be held Monday, January 24th at 7:30 p.m. Link information will be emailed in advance. We also hope to offer online presentations. We will keep you posted.

Pray the Rosary

We are taking a short Christmas break and will resume in January when every Friday evening at 7:30 p.m. we pray the Rosary online via Zoom. Each week different intentions are announced and anyone can request prayers ahead of time by contacting Maryse or Carmen via their information on the last page of this newsletter. Cameras do not have to be on and everyone will be asked to mute their microphones at the beginning of prayers. Only those leading the prayers will be heard. Everyone is welcome to follow along. This link below is the same link used every Friday.

<https://zoom.us/j/94327881622?pwd=UWpCTjR4cjFldGc5Yjk4bE5nbEg0dz09>

If needed: Meeting ID: 943 2788 1622

Passcode: 263230

Help is Here

We have members who are happy to help anyone needing assistance with grocery shopping, errands or appointments. Please contact Maryse at:

maryse.ristuccia@gmail.com

Prayers

Let us remember these fellow sisters in our prayers:

Noreen Boyle Ulrike Licht Jennifer
Carmel Richard Marlene Libbus

Message from Maryse

Christmas is here and we should be joyful and anticipating a wonderful celebration, yet we feel as if we are stuck in the movie "Groundhog Day", endlessly reliving the pandemic restrictions. While we were all hopeful for a normal Christmas this year, it is more normal than last year but still not what our hearts long for. I will take courage from the angels' message to the shepherds, "*Fear not, for I bring you good news. Go to Bethlehem and you will find that a Saviour is born for you today.*" Let us not hide in fear but seek out the joy of Christmas, it is still there for us to find. Christ is here for us to give us strength and guide us through these anxious times.

Normally our CWL ladies would be getting together and sharing a Christmas meal, sharing laughter and sisterhood and feeling fulfilled by their Christmas projects. This year, again, we can't get together in person but we can feel happy that we still reached out

to those in need with our donations; financial and food and other items in a safe way. Thank you all for your continued support and participation.

A huge thank you to the ladies of the CWL Executive who have stepped forward to continue leading our council encouraged by the 70 year legacy of the ladies at St. John's. I look forward to working together to make our world a better place, guided by our shining star; the hope that the Christ child brings us. Let us all not be afraid of what the future brings as we know that Emmanuel is with us.
Merry Christmas to one and all.

2022 Membership

Due to the pandemic, our 2022 membership drive continues to be a challenge for both new memberships and renewals. Again this year, we will accept e-transfer, cheque and cash payments and we'll even pick your payment up if you prefer! Those who did not pay their membership for 2021 and wish to keep their 'years of service' intact, must pay for both 2021 and 2022 this time otherwise your service years will be rolled back to a year one status. An email will be sent soon with the 2022 membership details. We look forward to your continued 'yes' as we move into our 71st year as a council!

Wanted

WILLING HANDS AND HEARTS

Your Executive Council needs women to step into the following roles: Treasurer and Spiritual Development. These positions are very important to our council but are not overly time consuming. We all work together, and you will receive lots of support. Please consider taking a more active role. If you wish to discuss what the roles entail, please contact Maryse or go to this link: <https://ottawa.cwl.on.ca/files/1%20Duties%20of%20the%20Officers%20Answers.pdf>

Spiritual Development

Everyone is encouraged to seek out the vast amount of spiritual content provided through the online FORMED platform. To quote Deacon Paul, "It's like Netflix for Catholics.", and so much more. To access FORMED visit the parish website. The Christmas holidays are an excellent opportunity for you and your family to explore all it has to offer!

Spiritual Reflection

This past Friday was our last Rosary night for this year. It has been a lovely way to end each work week together in prayer. We have enjoyed coming together online, checking in on each other and then praying the Rosary

for various intentions. This time-honoured tradition has kept us connected in an uncertain and anxiety ridden world. Repeating the well-known prayers has given us comfort and hope and brought us closer to Mary and Our Saviour. My hope is that all of you, my sisters in the League, have found a way of coming closer to God as the time for celebrating the birth of his Son arrives. Last week's Rosary was for a Blessed Christmas as we meditated on the Joyful Mysteries. Below is a prayer with which we began the Rosary and then short reflections on each Mystery. Perhaps you will be inspired to pray the Rosary as we enter the Season of Christmas: Christmas just begins on Christmas Eve. Wishing you and your families a joyous Christmas season centered on the Saviour who came to us.

Prayer: I am thankful Lord. In this holy season of prayer and song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us: for shining star and angels' song, for infant's cry in lowly manger. We praise you for the Word made flesh in a little Child. We behold his glory and are bathed in its radiance. Be with us as we sing the ironies of Christmas; the incomprehensible comprehended, the poetry made hard fact, the helpless Babe who cracks the world asunder. We kneel before you shepherds, innkeepers, wisemen. Help us to rise bigger than we are. Amen.

The First Joyful Mystery: The Annunciation

Scripture: Luke 1: 26-38

Reflection: This is Mary's moment, the moment when her "yes" changed the world. Imagine the monumental courage that would have required. Think about it. An angel appeared to Mary and told her she would be the mother of the Saviour, the mother of God. She was a teenager, only a child. What the angel said made no earthly sense. What was Mary thinking? What would have happened if she had said no? *We pray for the love of humility.*

The Second Joyful Mystery: The Visitation

Scripture: Luke 1: 39-45

Reflection: God turned Mary's world upside down. What did Mary do? She rushed off to serve her cousin, Elizabeth, who was pregnant in her old age. It was Mary's first reaction. Too often our first reaction is one of selfishness: "I don't feel like it ... I'll do it later ... Can't someone else take care of it?" But Mary had an instinct to serve, an entrenched humility. *We pray for charity towards neighbours.*

The Third Joyful Mystery: The Birth of Jesus

Scripture: Luke 2: 1-7

Reflection: The world is a mess: war, poverty, corruption, greed, selfishness, violence, abuse, injustice.

The face of evil torments ordinary people every day, and yet God chose to put himself in the middle of our mess. The humility of God is incredible. He places himself right in the middle of our mess as the solution to it. We don't deserve it. We have no claim to it. God gives us a new beginning, a fresh start, freely and without merit. *We pray for the spirit of poverty.*

[The Fourth Joyful Mystery: The Presentation](#)

Scripture: Luke 2: 22-38

Reflection: Mary presented Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem, dedicating him to God according to the Jewish custom. As she did so, a man named Simeon said something astounding, "*Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation*" (Luke 2:29-30). Have you ever waited for something with great anticipation? Did you wait patiently? What are you waiting for in your life right now? Simeon had waited. He had waited patiently and prayed patiently for the Saviour. Now, he took baby Jesus in his arms. Imagine the emotion as he pulled the child to his chest. His face filled with a strange combination of joy and anguish. Joy for the present, anguish for the future he knows the child will face. *We pray for the virtue of obedience.*

[The Fifth Joyful Mystery: The Finding of Jesus in the Temple](#)

Scripture: Luke 2: 41-52

Reflection: On their way home from celebrating the Passover in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph actually lost Jesus. God, the Creator of the universe, had entrusted Jesus the Messiah to Mary and Joseph's care—and they lost him. Imagine what they were thinking and how they were feeling: grief, torment, distress, anguish, torture. So often we lose Jesus in our own lives and don't even notice. *We pray for the virtue of piety.*

Christmas Stories

As Christmas is just days away please enjoy these stories from some of your CWL sisters as a way to find connection with each other while we must continue to stay apart. You were asked to send a story about a special Christmas gift once received, either material or from the heart, or you could send in a story about a special Christmas tradition that is unique to your family alone, not a cultural tradition; maybe something used that has been handed down, maybe a special family prayer or song, etc. Following are the submissions:

Roseanne Nihtila wrote: "I received my first pair of ice skates when I was 10 years old from my Godfather, who was also my uncle. I learned how to skate on a home-made rink. I never became a great figure skater, but I did enjoy the sport. Risto and I enjoyed going to

Ottawa to skate on the Rideau Canal. Merry Christmas to all."

Norma McCleverty sent the photo below and wrote:

"When my youngest son Patrick, who is 46 now, was about 5 years old he made these snowmen with a neighbour named Robin. She was an extremely talented, craft oriented woman and loved to make crafts with the neighbourhood children.

Very sadly she died at a very early age.

The snowmen are always the first decorations to be put up with such great memories.

Everything is as it was all those years ago although the paper song sheets really need replacing but I haven't the heart to change anything."



Norma also wrote, "A wonderful family tradition for us is attending Christmas Eve Mass." In the photo below Norma is with her 'Western family' (Cochrane, Alberta) dressed in their finery before heading out to Christmas Eve Mass. This photo was taken Christmas 2013.



Geri Crisci also sent in two stories. With the first, she sent the photo below and wrote: "Every Christmas Eve as my family gathers for dinner (7 fishes in the Italian tradition), I tell the story of how my brother took my mother away from me on Christmas Eve when I was 5 years old, and kept her in the hospital for an entire week! Everyone rolls their eyes and groans and asks me why I can't get over it, already! Of course, the answer to that question is that it makes for a good traditional, annual story-telling opportunity.

The more factual version may go something like this: My mother was due to deliver her 2nd child, at the end of January. However, on the evening of December 23rd, it became obvious to her that it was time to go to the hospital. I was quickly brought to my loving Grandparents (who were wonderful, caring and loving, but, God love them, didn't speak a word of English, and I did not speak Italian). I did not see my Dad until the next day; I was worried about my Mom, though everyone was reassuring (I was fortunate to have another Grandmother who did speak English and came to see me the next day and 22 aunts and uncles who all managed to come over, as, after all, it was Christmas Eve. When my Dad finally got back, he was carrying a Teddy Bear with him. He knelt down and said "Geraldine, this is from your baby brother". Such a smart and loving Dad! Of course, it made me immediately love this little brother and made me feel very special. So blessed, am I, to have such a caring and nurturing family! So why does everyone roll their eyes??? I think it's a lovely story!"



Geri's second story was about a special gift: "Christmas was always a very special time of the year in our house as in so many households around the world. My parents always did a great job of choosing presents for us that were just right. Very blessed children! When I

was 12, I remember waking up and going to the Christmas tree. We were all very excited, opening presents, sharing our gifts and in general, having a wonderful time. I noticed one last object under the tree, a metal trash bin; small, something you would place in a bedroom. I wondered "why would anyone give a trash bin as a Christmas present??!!" I was really surprised (and frankly a little disappointed) when my parents said it was for me (I could see that my brother was clearly relieved). Well! Imagine my surprise, when I saw that it was filled with books! I was an avid reader and nothing could make me happier. As it turned out, I read all 13 of those books over the next 2 months. You see, between January 6th and March 1st, I contracted mumps; then measles and the grand finale was chicken pox! Those books in the bin turned out to be very special, indeed, as they entertained me during some very painful and itchy times. You never know....."

Maryse Ristuccia wrote: "There are many Christmas traditions that my family follows, some cultural, some specific to our family.

A tradition that I am writing about is one created by me. It is our special Advent calendar that I began when my daughter was about 5. She was so excited about the arrival of Christmas that she wanted to do it all in one day: put up the tree, decorate the house, send cards, and bake cookies, all on the same day. Phew! Working full time, it was barely possible to do just one thing a day which gave me the idea to spread all the preparatory activities out across Advent and connect them to the feast days throughout.

On our Advent calendar there are little pockets and in those I placed riddles that she had to solve which would tell her what the feast day was and what was to be set up for that day. So, December 6th is the feast of St. Nicholas, and the riddle is "a bishop dressed in red shares gifts after you've gone to bed" and that was the day to put out the little statue of St. Nicholas and put up the stockings. On December 13th, the feast of St. Lucia, "a martyred beauty from your father's city, the patroness of sight and light, brings us sparkle to brighten the cold winter night" and this meant that it was time to turn on the Christmas lights every night at sunset. It was a push to write up something for each day and some of the riddles were not so creative, but the activities got done slowly and the anticipation grew. As the kids grew, they themselves rewrote the riddles to better fit the dates and be more poetic. I have now passed on the calendar to my daughter as she so loved it and she still pretty much follows the plan."

Carmen Vanderreest wrote: After coming to Canada my mother's parents would always send a special parcel

to us for Christmas. A couple of times it arrived just in time for Christmas but often it would be delivered late as it was sent by sea. It would be filled with Dutch dry foods, letters and photos from both my mother's and father's family members, knitted and linen items, delicious sweet Christmas treats and always one small gift for each of us wrapped in newspapers. We would unwrap the paper carefully because my father always looked forward to reading the Dutch news "van thuis" (from home) even though it was weeks late. After my mother's parents died, my Mom would always wrap one present for each of us in newspaper in memory of her parents. After my mother's death, my siblings and I have continued this little family Christmas tradition with our own children and they, in turn, are doing the same with their families.

Advent Project

Another successful collection! Thank you to all who were able to donate items for those who are in need. Members were asked to either donate food items or toiletries. The food was for Christmas baskets for clients of the Teesdale Food Bank run by the Neighbourhood Group (new official name for Neighbourhood Link) and the toiletries were split between Native Child and Family Services on Kingston Rd. and the Red Door Family Shelter on Carlaw Ave. Items were dropped off on the porches of either Maryse or Carmen. A big shout out of thanks to some of the choir members who collected the bulk of the food when they went carolling door to door last weekend on Maryse's street!



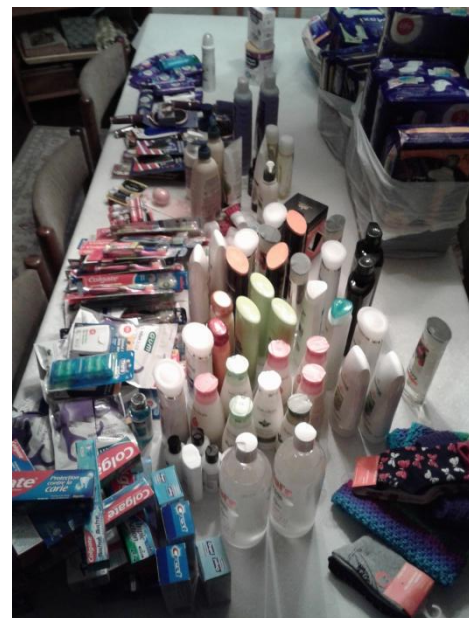
Food donations that had been dropped at Maryse's house as well as the food collected through carolling.



Food donations that were dropped at Carmen's house.



Some of St. John's choir members ready to go carolling and collect food donations!



All of the donated toiletry items.

Outdoor Church Crèche

The church crèche has been recently renovated and stands proudly on the front lawn of the church reminding all passersby of the true reason Christmas is celebrated.

Gwendolyn Healy, a Toronto artist and friend of our parish, gave freely of her time to remodel our crèche based on her research of living conditions at the time of Christ's birth. We are only two days away from when the figure of baby Jesus will arrive in the crèche!

Below are before and after photos showing Gwendolyn's lovely renovation work.



Before




After

Special Thanks

After more than 20 years of service Maryse Ristuccia has retired from caring for the altar and the sanctuary through flowers, linens and decorating. This was charity work that brought so much joy to Maryse; her ability to give of her talents to praise God. Her weekly floral displays gracing the tabernacle and statues were always creatively reflective of the Liturgical calendar with its defined seasons, many feast days and celebrations. Maryse always planned ahead on how to tie the floral tributes to the altar linens for maximum expression in honouring Christ. Many of the linens are of her own making. Her gift for decorating always shone brightest at Christmas and Easter when she would lead a few others in transforming the muted wait into a burst of colourful exaltation.

Maryse, your creative expressions of praise will be missed. Thank you for your many years of service.

Also retiring from service are the "gardening angels", Carmen Vanderreest and Anu Herath. Carmen has cared for the church gardens for 14 years and welcomed Anu's help for the past 6 years. They want to thank everyone for the generous donations given on all the 'Flower Sunday' collections over the years. Those funds are what really kept the gardens 'growing'. Carmen jokes that "on bended knee" takes on a whole different meaning when you're outside of the church digging holes for bulbs! And, she hopes those many bulbs are not too stressed or damaged during the strange freeze and thaw cycles expected this winter. She leaves you with these garden tips:

- ✚ Sunflowers will always face the sun. Plant them so you will see them, not your neighbour.
 - ✚ Squirrels don't like the smell of garlic. Sprinkle a good amount of garlic powder around your tulips regularly before and while blooming.
 - ✚ Don't put cut daffodils in a vase with other cut flowers. Daffodil sap will cause the others to wilt.
 - ✚ Cut lilac branches will make a flame in the same colour as its flower when burned. Wood must be well seasoned (dried) before burning.
-  Always be kind to the bees and other pollinators!

December Birthdays!



Happy birthday to everyone celebrating a birthday this month including:

- **Karen Edwards** on the 14th
- **Ulrike Licht** on the 18th
- **Fr. John-Mark Missio** on the 29th

Knights of Columbus Lottery

Last chance to buy tickets for this online 50/50 lottery in support of the Knights of Columbus Ontario Charities Foundation! Tickets are 15 for \$10, 40 for \$20 or 100 for \$40. Ticket numbers are computer generated and emailed to the buyer.

Tickets for this last quarter draw end soon. The payout prize grows daily based on ticket sales. Currently, it stands at over \$29,600! The winning ticket will be drawn on December 31st. When ordering, there is a drop-down menu under "Organization" to choose a parish council – St. John's Council number is "Scarborough Beaches 7008".

For full details and to purchase your tickets go to:

<https://www.kofcontario5050.com>



“O come, O come, Emmanuel”

Christmas blessings to all.

Calendar

January 22nd – World Day of Prayer
January 24th – CWL Parish General Meeting
January 26th – Bell Let’s Talk Day
February 11th – World Day of the Sick
February 12th – CWL Development Day

Catholic Family Services

A wide variety of programs and services are offered through Catholic Family Services of Toronto. Due to the pandemic they have moved to online assistance. Their counsellors “are prepared to work with the needs, strengths, values, and goals of individuals and families. We also recognise and sensitively respond to differences in cultural, racial, gender, and religious backgrounds of clients.”

Please call **416-921-1163** (Central Toronto office) or **416-222-0048** (North Toronto office) and leave a message with your name and contact information. A staff person will contact you and provide you with further information.” You can also send an email to this main address: info@cfstoronto.com

FEE FOR SERVICE:

Counselling fees are charged according to a client’s income level. No one is denied service because of his/her inability to pay fees.” For more info go to: <https://www.cfstoronto.com>

Virtue of the Month

From the Toronto Catholic District School Board:
December’s virtue is Charity.

- “In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, *‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’*” – Acts 20:35
- “For it is in the giving that we receive.”
– St. Francis of Assisi
- “If you can’t feed a hundred people then just feed one” – Mother Teresa
- “No act of kindness, however small is ever wasted.” – Aesop
- “Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth.” – Mohammed Ali

Milk Bag Project **Currently Stopped**

Because Maryse is the only one crocheting these mats she now has a surplus of milk bags to work with so we will **stop collecting the bags until further notice.** Any that you have saved until now can still be dropped off to the porches at either:

87 Coalport Drive or **66A Osborne Ave.**

Maryse is asking anyone to help with the crocheting, it is a very simple chain stitch and says help would be most appreciated. Please email Maryse at: maryse.ristuccia@gmail.com

CWL Bursaries

CWL’s National Bursary Fund was established in 1990 and provides members with financial assistance while pursuing studies, courses, seminars, workshops and diploma/degree programs in areas of, spiritual growth, adult faith formation, youth ministry, ministry to patients in palliative care, ministry to shut-ins, parliamentary procedure, and literacy tutoring. Members use this bursary opportunity to take online courses and workshops. One thousand dollars can be awarded per year to a maximum of \$4,000 in a member's lifetime. Refer to item #552 on the League’s national website for criteria and application information. The League brochure is found at: <https://cwl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/312-National-Bursary-Fund-Brochure-2019.pdf>

CWL National Webpage

In ongoing efforts to inspire you in faith, service and social justice the League is happy to introduce a new permanent webpage that has been added to the CWL national website. “To Inspire” is the home for inspirational messaging and videos promoting the League: <https://cwl.ca/to-inspire/>

The CWL & Canadian Blood Services



Canadian Blood Services is always in need of blood donations.

Everyone has the privilege to donate blood and encourage others to donate. CWL members are asked to give the gift of life and to register with Canadian Blood Services “Partners for Life” program using the League's unique Partner ID (**CATH011269**) to record donations.

For information on Blood Services go to: <https://www.blood.ca/en>

Genetics

On the topic of Genetics, you can monitor and study the advantages / disadvantages of scientific developments in light of teachings of the Catholic Church through the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute (CCBI). Current information is available regularly on the CCBI website.

<http://www.ccbi-utoronto.ca/>

WUCWO

The Catholic Women's League of Canada (CWL) is officially recognized by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) as a lay association of women and is affiliated with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO), a world-wide federation holding membership in the conference of International Catholic Organizations.

Click here to discover all that WUCWO does and to read their monthly newsletter:

<https://www.wucwo.org/index.php/en/>

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