



March 2022

Transitional Executive

President: Maryse Ristuccia
Secretary: Celestine Hall
Treasurer: Joan Beal
Spiritual Development: Open
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 website for all matters relating to our church. Use it for all contact information and its many links such as the weekly Bulletin and 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

Our next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 12th at 7:30 p.m. online via Zoom. We are hopeful this will be our last online meeting and really look forward to an in-person meeting again in May!
The Zoom link will be emailed in advance.

Pray the Rosary

We pray the Rosary every Friday night at 8:00 p.m. online via Zoom. Prayers matter, prayers support and uplift. If you have a special prayer request for our Rosary night please let Maryse or Carmen know. 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. The link below is the same link used every Friday:
<https://zoom.us/j/94327881622?pwd=UWpCTjR4cjFldGc5Yjk4bE5nbEg0dz09>

If needed: Meeting ID: 943 2788 1622
Pass code: 263230
Dial up: +1 647 374 4685 Canada
+1 647 558 0588 Canada

Prayers

Let us remember these fellow sisters in our prayers:
Noreen Boyle Marlene Libbus Carmel Richard

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

Consecration

On Friday, March 25th, Feast of the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, Pope Francis consecrated Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary to pray for peace. World-wide he invited "...every community and all the faithful to unite with me..." for the consecration, to pray as one, at the same time for peace. Following is an excerpt of the consecratory prayer:

"Star of the Sea, do not let us be shipwrecked in the tempest of war. Ark of the New Covenant, inspire projects and paths of reconciliation. Queen of Heaven, restore God's peace to the world. Eliminate hatred and the thirst for revenge, and teach us forgiveness. Free us from war, protect our world from the menace of nuclear weapons. Queen of the Rosary, make us realize our need to pray and to love. Queen of the Human Family, show people the path of fraternity. Queen of Peace, obtain peace for our world.

O Mother, may your sorrowful plea stir our hardened

hearts. May the tears you shed for us make this valley parched by our hatred blossom anew. Amid the thunder of weapons, may your prayer turn our thoughts to peace. May your maternal touch soothe those who suffer and flee from the rain of bombs. May your motherly embrace comfort those forced to leave their homes and their native land. May your sorrowful heart move us to compassion and inspire us to open our doors and to care for our brothers and sisters who are injured and cast aside."

Aid for Ukraine



As the war on Ukraine continues there is an urgent need for humanitarian help. Prayer is needed as well as donations which can be made through these links:

The Archdiocese of Toronto

<https://www.archtoronto.org/en/contact-us/donations/donate-pages/donate-to-humanitarian-relief/>

Canadian Red Cross

<https://donate.redcross.ca/page/100227/donate/1?locale=en-CA>

Message from Maryse

Happy Spring! It's been a long winter with lots more snow and many more cold days than the last few winters. This winter I didn't manage many daily walks compared to last winter and I am certainly looking forward to getting back out there. I am also excited about things opening up again, and hopeful that the number of infections don't increase. Hopeful is the feeling of spring! Hopeful, as we come closer to Easter. Hopeful, as things return to normal and hopeful that our CWL activities can bring us all together again in person. To this end we hope to see everyone at our Welcome Back Café set for early May --- stay tuned for further details!

It has been a busy March for me as I have attended several Regional meetings and reported on our CWL activities here at St. John's. Those in attendance were very impressed at how our council has continued to remain in touch and engaged in our faith and service as a group. Kudos to the executive and our members who have stayed at home but stayed in touch! One of the items that was discussed at the regional level was the decrease in membership, very much due to the pandemic, it is difficult to reach everyone when not all have access or are comfortable with technology. If you have not renewed your membership, or have thought of becoming a member, it is not too late. Contact me and

we will find the easiest way to count you in.

Membership matters!

As Lent continues, drawing us to a glorious Easter Day, I hope that your days are fruitful and productive as you grow in your faith. I look forward to seeing you all in person soon at the CWL Way of the Cross night on April 8th. Look for details elsewhere in this newsletter. Come, let us renew ourselves and rise again just as the earth renews itself each spring. Blessings.

Message from Our Clergy

This space is shared by Fr. John-Mark and Deacon Paul on a rotating basis. This month's message is from Fr. John-Mark.

"Go and make disciples of all nations." Matthew 28:19. There will be 5 new fully-initiated Catholics in St. John's Parish in this Easter Season. From the Easter Vigil to Pentecost, these new adult members of our Catholic community have responded to a yearning in their hearts towards the fullness of life in the Church. Three are converting from other Christian denominations, and two were not catechized after baptism and had no other sacraments. This is a sign of the Lord at work among us, that even in the midst of a pandemic, we have new brothers and sisters joining our community. It might be a sign to us to imagine what could happen if we actually were proactive in seeking out those who need a spiritual home and might enjoy the rich spirituality of our Catholic faith. Every one has a different reason for coming into the Church, but one stands out, and I have heard this often before: it is the amazing truth of the Holy Eucharist that draws people into the Church. When people hear the words of Jesus – This is my body, this is my blood, take and eat, take and drink – they know that there is something so far beyond our understanding, but so compelling, that they want to know what we believe. And once they know that we believe that Jesus truly shares his Body and Blood with us, as divine food for eternal life, they respond to the truth of our belief, and desire this Communion with a deep spiritual longing. The Eucharist has brought many people into the Church. As we wonder about people coming back after the pandemic, it will be the Eucharist that will bring them back. Of course it will be the community too, as old friends are reunited. Many stayed in touch through online Masses. But the Eucharist is one thing that had no virtual substitute. As we return to in-person gatherings, take some time to consider how important it is for us to share the Body and Blood of the Lord. And consider those who are out there who are seeking this very intimate Communion with Jesus, and be ready to invite the seeker to our process of initiation. Then one

day, after the rites which prepare you for reception or initiation into the Holy Catholic Church, these seekers can know the joy of partaking of the Bread of Life and benefiting from all the sacraments in which we encounter the living God.

2022 Membership

To date 47 members have said 'yes' and paid their dues for 2022 – thank you for believing in the many good works of our council.

Any female 16 yrs or older is welcome to join! If you have yet to renew or are interested in joining, the \$25 annual fee can be paid in one of the following ways: e-transfer to our new council account at: jaybeescwl@gmail.com or mail or drop off a cheque to Maryse Ristuccia at 87 Coalport Dr. M1N 4B5 or to Joan Beal at 25 Ferncroft Dr. M1N 2X3. Cheques are payable to "St. John's CWL". Please include your name, address, phone number and email address if you have one.

If these payment methods are not convenient for you, contact Maryse to pick your payment up:

maryse.ristuccia@gmail.com

We look forward to this 71st year as a council!

Spiritual Development

By Maryse Ristuccia



“As Christians, our task is to make daily progress toward God. Our pilgrimage on earth is a school in which God is the only teacher, and it demands good students, not ones who play truant. In this school we learn something every day. We learn something from the commandments, something from examples, and something from Sacraments. These things are remedies for our wounds and materials for our studies.” -- St. Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 A.D.

Living in a family with teaching and education as a daily focus, this quote from St. Augustine was a great analogy for me. As each day of Lent passes, I work towards a closer relationship with God. Each small action reinforces my interaction with God and draws me closer

to who I was meant to be. As St. Augustine writes, we learn from different sources, and we must open ourselves and make time in our lives to use these various ways to grow our relationship with the Lord. Lent is made for this: a time to stop the hurry of daily life and make a concerted effort to talk and listen to God. We have many opportunities during Lent to practice: Daily Prayer, the Rosary, Mass, Confession, The Way of the Cross, reading Scripture and so many good sources through modern technology. Let's make this last part of Lent a pilgrimage walk toward Easter, a walk with Christ by our side. As teachers tell their students; no matter the subject, practice is required every day to achieve understanding and success. Making daily progress towards God requires commitment. Find the best time for yourself, whether it is in the early morning quiet, an afternoon lull or after the busyness of the day is done.

Way of the Cross – CWL Night

Please join us with your family and friends at 7 p.m. on Friday, April 8th in the church as we return to an in-person evening involving CWL members in the service. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to contact any executive member.

Memorial Mass for Deceased CWL Members

On the Feast Day of our Patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel, a Mass will be celebrated in the church in remembrance of our departed sisters. All members are asked to join in this celebration where family members of our deceased sisters will be invited to attend. There will be a brief social time in the Hall after the Mass; a chance to say hello in person! Join us Tuesday, April 26th at 7 p.m.



We are half way through Lent. May your journey to Christ grow ever stronger.

Still Needed

There is one position left to fill on our executive. We hope there is a member interested in taking on our Spiritual Development chair position. Is it you?! Executive positions are very important to our council but are not overly time consuming. We work together and provide lots of support. Please consider stepping up for this role. If you wish to discuss what the role entails, please contact Maryse or go to this link: <https://ottawa.cwl.on.ca/files/1%20Duties%20of%20the%20Officers%20Answers.pdf>

Fundraiser

Watch your emails and the Bulletin for details of a parish wide fundraiser planned for April 23rd / 24th! We will have a low cost environmentally friendly product for sale that's sure to be useful for everyone!

Guest Speaker



Our guest speaker in February was Jackie Eldridge co-founder of Hearts and Minds Matter. Dr. Eldridge is a keynote speaker, author, workshop presenter and teacher educator bringing inclusion,

emotional intelligence, resilience, trauma-informed practice and mindfulness to the world.

Jackie Eldridge began her presentation by sharing some of her personal experiences in life. In particular she spoke about becoming sick a few years ago and thinking it was the flu, but after many medical appointments with different specialists, she was diagnosed with fibromyalgia.

This diagnosis sent her on a personal wellness journey where Jackie learned that over time, suppressing emotions can manifest into mental and physical problems. She told us about going to the Omega Centre in New York for mindfulness training; five days of profound study into the idea of mindfulness.

After much study Jackie began teaching and hosting mindfulness retreats which incorporate many traditions from Eastern religions. She brought us the idea that prayer is talking to God and mindfulness is listening to God; listening with our mind, heart and spirit.

Jackie spoke about how one's energy is increased during meditation and how when many people come together in meditation the energy created grows within the group and can be shared. She also spoke about how mood swings can affect energy levels and the need to monitor how much negative information we absorb daily from all sources. She said we need to respect ourselves and make the best of each experience; that we should not worry about past and future but focus on the present. Mindfulness is still being aware of things but not letting them take control of us.

Jackie suggested we take time to listen to relaxing music, or to a guided meditation - she likes Jon Kabat-Zinn although there are many other guides to choose from on YouTube - taking relaxing baths or showers and eating slowly to enjoy the taste our food. She encouraged us to practice more of what we know relaxes and calms us.

Jackie explained that the average person has about 80,000 thoughts daily and that the majority of those thoughts are negative. She told us of the 'stop and drop' method of breathing to relax the body, calm the mind and re-energize, saying it is especially effective for anxiety. Jackie led us through a 'stop and drop' exercise session where we 'stop' all activity, close our eyes and 'drop' our focus into our breathing. As thoughts came into mind we were to simply acknowledge them – no dwelling – and move our focus back to our breathing. She asked us to mentally 'scan' our bodies beginning at our feet and working up to our heads noting that stress is often held in our backs and jaws. She then had us think on our hearts and any unconditional love we have experienced, perhaps from a person or a pet maybe in the past or in the present. She asked us to extend that unconditional love, through mindfulness, to our families, friends, neighbours – to grow and spread it – through the province, country, continent and out to the people of Ukraine and Russia and out over the lands, waters, plants and animals of the planet before bringing it back to ourselves. We ended with a minute of silence before opening our eyes. Jackie closed with the idea that Lent is a devotion bringing us closer to God and that we can use mindfulness to deepen that devotion.

Mental Health and Wellness Corner

By our Health co-chairs Geri Crisci and Krysia Theriault

Serotonin and its Importance in our Lives

We're enjoying an additional hour of daylight and the snow drops surfacing in many neighborhood gardens. Is it really Spring?! Hopefully! Daylight, warm sunshine and the appearance of blooms often make us smile, which is very good for our mental health.

In our general meeting this month, several CWL members shared their experiences of inspiration from women in their lives (see this newsletter for excerpts). Drawing inspiration is a marvelous mental health booster – a person you know or have known; a speech you've heard; a work of art; a book; a song; a child's laughter; a saint's life; a meaningful prayer. Inspiration brings a deep breath/sigh; often a smile or sense of warmth. Every time we engage in the witnessing or experience of inspiration, we boost much needed serotonin.

Serotonin is a chemical produced by nerve cells. While found mostly in the digestive system, it is also in blood platelets and found throughout the nervous system. Serotonin is made from the essential amino acid tryptophan (which may be why people who eat turkey feel very content and sleepy after a Thanksgiving meal).

There are many signs of serotonin deficiency including low mood and low quality sleep. (Of course always check with your health practitioner if/when you are experiencing any signs that something is not quite right).

Lack of serotonin can be caused by a poor diet (lacking in essential nutrients); chronic stress; a lack of exposure to natural light and inadequate exercise. Raising serotonin levels can be accomplished by exercising regularly, healthy eating; including foods which increase serotonin levels such as eggs, cheese, turkey, nuts, tofu, salmon and pineapple. Meditation and prayer can relieve stress and promote a positive life view, which can greatly boost serotonin levels.

So, we end where we began: who or what inspires you? Can each of us reflect on how we're doing and what little changes we might make to improve our lives? Whether it's taking the time to take in the inspirational opportunities in your life, or taking a walk to notice the season's changes, or just paying attention to what we're eating, each of us may be able to do something small to add positivity to our lives. Wishing you a Happy Spring and Happy Mental Health!

We're passing along this interesting article on mental health for those who may be interested.

"Why We Need A Social Media Examen" on keeping mentally healthy with our interactions with social media authored by Eric A. Clayton the deputy director for communications at the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States.

<https://www.jesuits.org/stories/social-media-examen/>

As always we welcome your opinions, contributions and welcome guest columnists. If there is something you would like to see covered in the Mental Health and Wellness Corner please let us know!

Memories of First Confession



The young children of our parish received their Sacrament of Reconciliation earlier this month so the newsletter questions for March were: which church did you receive your Sacrament of Reconciliation

(Confession)? Do you remember the anticipation / fear beforehand? And, do you want to share what it was that you confessed? 😊

From **Joan Beal**:

"I was born into St. John's parish and made my First Confession (Sacrament of Reconciliation) here.

I remember it being a very frightening event – stepping into that dark box behind the heavy velvet curtain – it was certainly very scary.

I remember kneeling in the dark in front of a tiny screened window waiting for the priest to slide it open – thoughts of – "What if I forget my opening line! What if I can't remember all my sins! What if I forget my Act of Contrition!" – running through my mind.

Thankfully my memorizing of the Baltimore Catechism held firm and I made it!! I stepped out of that dark closet into the light cleansed of all my 'sins'! 😊

I know it reads more than a bit dramatic, but I remember it being very scary. One of my classmates was in tears. We had a few "fire & brimstone" priests in those days too. Thankfully the church has changed and I hope that today's youth do not feel as scared as we were in those days – 64 years ago!!"

From **Maryse Ristuccia**:

"When I was ten years old, I was preparing to receive my First Holy Communion and as I did not attend a Catholic Elementary School, I would attend classes on Saturday's to prepare for this first big event in my life, the first big event that I could actually remember and be involved in. As the day came closer we were instructed that in a couple of Saturday's we would have our First Confession, as it was then called. My cousin Marie, who was a year older than I and attended a Catholic School, was very knowledgeable about what would happen as she had been through the process the previous year. Big cousin Marie was very happy to share her superior knowledge and told me all about going into the confessional in Holy Name Church, what it looked like and not to be afraid of the dimly lit space. Feeling all geared up and ready for my First Confession and ready to make my entrance and kneel in the wooden "closet-like" space I received a big shock on the actual day. On confession day I was directed to a side room in the church Hall, a wide open space with just a kneeler and the priest sitting on a chair under many fluorescent lights. The total antithesis of what I had been told and what I expected! Needless to say, it was not a very positive experience, I was dumbstruck by the brightness and couldn't even say what I had rehearsed and prepared for. The priest was a bit annoyed by what seemed like my lack of preparation and reprimanded me. I finally spoke up reciting my little grocery list of sins. Took me a while to go back!"

From **Jenni Commanda**: "Well, for me my First Reconciliation was a little different as I was an adult. I wasn't Confirmed until 2000 as part of the RCIA program at St. John's when 10 adults were Initiated

and 1 child as there was a family of 4 receiving all the Sacraments. It didn't matter that I was an adult, I was still petrified and afraid I was going to fall off of the little kneeler in the booth - actually we all worried about that. What I confessed had to do with the Ten Commandments, and I remember the priest saying "Oh, that's not a sin" which really confused me but I think he just wanted to get them over with as it was rumoured he was claustrophobic!"

From **Geri Crisci**: "I received the Sacrament of Reconciliation at Saint Rose of Lima Church in New Haven, Connecticut. I remember being very excited about my First Confession! We had prepared in class and we would talk about it frequently during recess and after school. It felt like a "rite of passage" somehow, like once we had received this 2nd Sacrament, we were on our way to becoming "big kids". While kind of knowing what to expect from our classes, I was quite nervous about what I was actually going to say! I remember going through the Commandments and figuring out that only 2 of them really applied to me, so I went with them! Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother (ok that means obey) and Thou Shalt Not Lie (ok, I'm sure there must have been some incidents falling into this category). Great! I had my sins lined up. Next: how many times had I transgressed????? I made up some numbers....I could only think of a few specifics for each sin category, but in my 7 year old mind, it didn't seem like enough to say! The hardest part of the entire experience was memorizing the prayer at the end: "Oh my God I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee.....". I remember feeling very happy and relieved when it was over, as I walked up to the kneeler at the altar to say my penance prayers!"

From **Norma McCleverty**:
"It was a long time ago but here is what I remember I think I was 7 when I made my 1st Confession. I went to a Catholic school and the teachers were very kind and gentle in preparing us. I was a bit nervous going into the confessional but our teachers were right there. A very kind priest spoke quietly and gently . I forgot what to say when I went inside. He guided me through and said the necessary prayers with me. I had a young sister who sometimes cried a lot. I confessed that I wished she didn't cry so much! I was told to be patient and love her. I love her to pieces!" ❤️

From **Carmen Vanderreest**: "My First Confession was received at St. John's when I was 7 years old, in grade 2. My teacher, a nun, was very reassuring in telling us not to worry, that we had followed our catechism

instructions well and that God was full of mercy, love and forgiveness. I sure hoped she was truthful because I had an older brother who was telling me differently for days before; purposely scaring me regardless of my mother's many warnings to leave me alone. My older sister wasn't much better but she at least helped me memorize my opening and closing prayers and had no problem reciting what she thought I should confess! Admittedly, I was often in trouble; teasing, pestering, and at times lying and even striking out physically; mostly because my siblings often taunted me. I knew I had to tell God everything but didn't want my teacher or classmates to judge me by how long I was taking in the confessional. My brother had called me the black sheep of our family a couple of times and I had a good idea of what it meant so when that little window slid open in front of my praying hands I summed everything up by confessing that I was a black sheep and I was sorry. The priest asked if I wanted to explain what I meant and I said "No, but I am very sorry." I pulled back the heavy curtain and remember walking up to the altar on shaky legs, I knelt down and forgot what my penance was! I knew it was prayers but which ones and how many? After a moment I prayed a Hail Mary and an Our Father and promised God I would remember next time."

Inspiring Women

In recognition of International Women's Day held March 8th our executive were asked to share stories at our March meeting of a woman they found inspiring. These are their stories:

Celeste Hall wrote about her mother and her aunt: "My mother, Marguerite Makinson-Collins was an accomplished woman in both her professional and in her personal life. Mom was an incredibly supportive spouse and mother. Mom was a pianist, an archer, and a gourmet cook. In her professional life she was a chemical engineer who worked with the Allies during the WWII.

However, what is so true for many women, we have many positive individuals who influence and enrich our lives.

I would like to introduce to you to my Aunt Edna; Edna Collins-Mann. My aunt was born January 3, 1896 in Toronto. She was my father's older sister, Dad was born August 8, 1915.

Aunt Edna's mother died when she was ten years old. My grandfather did not know how to take care of four children, so he had different family members raise his children for about eight years. Then he married his second wife; my dad's mom and my grandmother.

What a great lady, she insisted that all the children be brought back under one roof as a family.

All four of my aunt's brothers, including my dad fought in both WWI and WWII, she was lucky that all survived, but her youngest brother died in 1918 from the Spanish Flu. Her older brothers moved to the USA in the twenties, for better jobs, leaving Edna with just her younger siblings, whom she loved dearly.

When she became of age, my Aunt Edna trained as a nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital in Toronto. During the twenties, my aunt became the first Roman Catholic to work for the City of Toronto as a public health nurse. Aunt Edna became a widow in 1960 and after that time, she filled the role of grandmother for my brothers and myself.

In 1972 at the age of 76, my Aunt Edna travelled with me to England so I could pursue my history studies. As I was only 17 at the time, my father would only let me go if I had a relative to travel with overseas. So, my aunt stepped up and we flew together on a Boeing 707 across 'the pond' to begin my studies. We travelled as a team around the UK, not only did I learn so much about English/Scottish/Welsh history, I also got an incredible lesson on the history of the Collins family. My aunt had leg surgery years before and walked with a cane, she just kept on going.

My aunt worked as a social worker until 1979 for the Catholic Children's Aid Society. Aunt Edna passed away in August 1982 after living a full and rewarding life.

My aunt inspired me, because she never gave up, kept a positive attitude and encouraged me to pursue my dreams and not be afraid.

I was truly blessed to have these two wonderful ladies to be there as guiding lights."

Maryse Ristuccia wrote about her great grandmother: "One of the women that has always inspired me is my maternal great grandmother. Great grandmother Elisabetta Gironde lived in a small town of about 20,000 people in a time with none of the things that we take for granted: no phones, no t.v., no internet, no cars, poor roads and in a time of poverty. She had no education and it is doubtful if she could even write her name but she was a woman of strength and great love. She married my great grandfather Francesco after his first wife died leaving him to raise three small children. Elisabetta took on that task, caring and treating those children as her own and then went on to have seven more children with her husband. While her husband worked to provide for the family, she took care of the needs of all the children, the home, preparing meals, doing laundry with no washing machine, ironing and all the while showing love and building bonds within the family. Those children knew

love and grew to show that love to their own children. This uneducated woman must have been an organizational wizard to keep everything going and at the same time put aside money and purchase land which she gave equally to each child when they left the family home to marry. Several of these plots of land still belong to the grandchildren and great grandchildren. The tiny row house in which she created this home of love and support is also still there and belongs to one of her grand-daughters who lives in New York. I have been in this house a number of times and tried to imagine her family of ten children and later her grandchildren filling it with laughter and noise. The bonds of love that she passed on are still alive today with cousins and second cousins, some who have never met in person, people who live in Argentina, Australia, France and French Guyana, reaching out and staying in touch with each other. This woman of infinite love, although she passed away long before I was born, still inspires me today to continue connecting with family members and teaching my children the importance of family love."

Jenni Commanda wrote about 3 women who have inspired her:

"For me it was difficult to come up with just one woman I was inspired by. I have been inspired in many ways by many fellow CWL members. So I came up with three. The first is my *Gokomis* (grandmother in Ojibwa) Beatrice St. Denis. I never got to meet her as she passed away before I was born. She inspires me for a few reasons. She gave birth to my dad outdoors while working a trap line with my *Mishoomis* (grandfather in Ojibwa) in the middle of winter! I can't envision what she went through! She was a mother to 14 children and all of them were part of the "Sixties Scoop", to have her children taken from her must have been horrible. Most women got the right to vote in 1927 but Native women never got the opportunity until 1964. So for her to see other woman treated and acknowledged as higher, better citizens compared to her would have been difficult. I believe I draw from her will. Just, wow. The second woman is my Great Aunt Madelaine Commanda. From her I get inspired by the fact that she saw all the residential school stuff going on around her and then have her husband Edward Commanda go overseas during WWII and come back. She's where I learned my ability to laugh in most situations. The third is my own Mom, Joy Commanda. Her inspiration is her strength and abilities to handle any situation. This started from the time I was little. When I was 2-ish (a toddler) my dad became a police officer and worked a lot of shifts so he wasn't around a lot.

She ran a household with 7 of us at that time. Four were foster kids with the youngest also being a toddler who had heart problems. I don't know how she did it but she cared for all of us aged 2 to 10. And, when I was 7 my parents separated and she, for the most part, continued to raise us as single mom - I guess she did a great job ;) lol! Thanks Mom!"

Geri Crisci wrote about her mother:

"My Mom was one of 6 children and as the oldest, she helped my grandparents take care of the family. My mother had to leave school at age 16 to find a job, as her family was struggling financially. Her dream of Nursing School vanished, though she spent her life taking care of her father (dressing his surgical wounds from stomach cancer surgery), her 16 year old brother (who died of polio of the lungs), her mother, who suffered a massive stroke at 52 following the death of her husband and son (providing care and rehab in our home) and her mother in law, a severe diabetic (giving daily insulin shots and helping her recover from limb amputation).

My mother is my inspiration for many reasons: she worked full time yet managed to provide a warm, loving, spotless home; clean, ironed clothes and home cooked meals daily. She loved us unconditionally, took excellent care of us and made every occasion special: birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays, even season changes ("Jack Frost visited us last night!"). To this day, I carry out her family traditions, even through this pandemic, though I haven't seen family in two and a half years. Mom explained Bible stories, taught us how to pray the Rosary and cherished and celebrated the days we received the sacraments.

My mother taught us to walk in gratitude; to appreciate everything with which we were blessed: our family; our home; our food; faith and health. She always saw the glass as half full and brought positivity to our lives. She was always kind, compassionate and truly put herself in the other person's shoes. My mother lived Christianity. One of my fondest memories of Mom was when, as an adult, I was in hospital for surgery. The anesthesiologist came into my room to explain the procedure and I didn't understand what he was talking about, which made me very nervous. As soon as my Mom saw my fear she ran out of the room and tracked him down. The next thing I knew, she was dragging him back into my room by his arm (Mom was 4 foot 11 inches - a comical sight as he was well over 6 feet.) She told him I had questions which he had better answer! I felt so touched by the swiftness of her response. That day she taught me the importance of addressing people's worries and concerns.

To this day, her many encouraging phrases come to me frequently: "God may close one door, but always opens another"; "Rome wasn't built in a day" (I was an impatient child); "Just do your best, no one expects you to be perfect"; "God will always help you." God certainly did help me when he gave me my mother."

Joan Beal wrote about a work colleague and friend: "When asked to do a short presentation on a woman I found inspiring, I immediately thought of Gabriela (Gabi) Kosinka - 29 December, 1926 – 14 July 2017 (90 years).

She was the wife of a former boss, Dr. Eduard Kosinka, a very prominent orthopaedic surgeon. She helped me out in the office a few days a week and quickly became like a 2nd mother, treating me as one of her daughters. She was a survivor – overcoming many obstacles throughout her life – never giving up. A very kind hearted, loving and generous woman. Strong willed and determined – a holocaust survivor.

She was an only child born into a wealthy, Jewish family in Czechoslovakia. Her parents separated when she was very young and she stayed with her mother who was a very religious woman. During the European unrest, she was educated in the Catholic school system by the Benedictine priests and nuns. As a Jew and for the love of her mother, she willingly joined her and on June 14th, 1944, she and her mother were transported to Auschwitz. Her mother was turned to the left and she to the right – she was never to see her mother alive again - she was 17 years old.

After the liberation, she started over again. She had nothing, but the will to carry on and she did. She met and married her husband and had 2 daughters. Then, in 1968, came the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia. From the comfort of her home and with her 2 young children, she escaped to Switzerland with not much more than they could carry, where they waited for her husband to join them. This was a very low period for her. She had questioned and lost her faith while in the camp. She made a promise to God that if her husband was able to escape and they would meet up and become a family once again, she would renew her faith in God and religion. With much prayer and the help of the underground, they were able to reunite, escape Europe and immigrate to Canada where she was determined to start a new life for her family and this she did.

Arriving in their new homeland with very little, she got a job and worked while her husband went back to medical school to achieve his Canadian specialty to practice medicine. Finally settled, they eventually bought a lovely home in Scarborough Bluffs, never forgetting

their struggles along the way. Always very thoughtful, kind and generous with those they could help and who had less."

Linda Duke wrote about her friend:

"One woman who has inspired me and influenced my life greatly, is my dear friend, Margaret Challis. When I met her 10 years ago, I discovered a woman who was deeply committed to helping other women improve their "lot in life".

As I got to know Margaret's personal history, I began to understand why she had such a strong focus. Back in 1968, like many working women at that time, Margaret became a secretary. While employed in the legal claims department of the TTC, she found herself increasingly taking on the duties of an insurance adjuster, while still being paid as a secretary. With the encouragement of her supervisor, she applied for and obtained the actual position of adjuster.

With this promotion, Margaret became the first woman adjuster in Toronto. She then went on to become the first woman president in the 50-year history of the Ontario Insurance Adjuster's Association. As a result of Margaret's courage in "pushing the boundaries", other women in the company started applying for, and obtaining, positions that finally recognized the work they were already doing, but not being paid for.

Even after retirement, Margaret continued to help other women through her involvement in an international women's organization called the Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO), whose motto is "Women helping Women reach for the Stars". She was in her mid-eighties when I met her and was still constantly on the look-out for women who might need financial assistance in achieving a higher level of education.

Margaret continues to this day to be an active member of PEO, after 40 years of helping other women achieve their potential. Throughout those years, her loving care and concern has inspired many other women, including myself, to join her."

Carmen Vanderreest wrote about an Indigenous Water Walker.

"Josephine Mandamin was an Anishinaabekwe woman from the Wikwemkoong Unceded Territory on the eastern peninsula of Manitoulin Island.

From age 6 to 12 she went to St. Joseph's Residential School in what is now Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Josephine was a mother to 8, grandmother to 13, great grandmother to 16 and she was a Water Walker.

In a ceremonial lodge an elder said, "Look around. See what is happening to the water. It has become polluted,

bottled and destroyed." She then said "In 30 years, if this negligence continues, an ounce of clean water will be more valuable than gold. What are you going to do about it?"

Josephine thought on this and in 2003, at age 61 Josephine and her sister Melvina decided to do a walk, carrying a small copper bucket of Lake Superior's water, to raise awareness of the abuse and disrespect of the Great Lakes, encouraging everyone to rebuild a sacred relationship with water, our most important resource. Their walk was also to recognize and embody the power of Anishinaabekwe women. That first walk was along highways and foot paths and they walked all the way around Lake Superior. For all those kilometres, Josephine carried that bucket with water in it, telling those who asked "We do it for the water."

Josephine states in a documentary "We're all born of water, we're all connected with the water; we're all related in that way. Even though we're not related by blood, we're related by water. Water is very precious for us. As women, we are carriers of the water. We carry life for the people. So when we carry that water, we are telling people that we will go to any length for the water. We'll probably even give our lives for the water if we have to. Mother Earth is a woman, and the abuse of what is happening to her is also happening to women; as Mother Earth's body is being abused, mistreated and prostituted — these are the same things happening to women."

In 2004, Josephine and other Anishinaabe women walked around the entirety of Lake Michigan, she walked around Lake Huron in 2005, Lake Ontario in 2006 and Lake Erie in 2007. For 10 years after that, Josephine did walks throughout North America and along each ocean coast, connecting all four directions of water in North America.

Along the way, she would talk about the effects of oil, gas and water fracking projects, and the overwhelming number of boil-water advisories or no water in Indigenous communities - and the parallel experiences of women and water.

Josephine kept walking, doing her last water walk in 2017 when she was 77. By then, she had travelled North America for 16 years walking more than 40,000 kilometres (25,000 miles) always carrying her bucket of water. All this in her senior years.

Josephine Mandamin died in 2019. Before her death she had founded the Water Protectors movement and the Mother Earth Water Walkers. In 2012 she received the Anishinabek Nation Lifetime Achievement Award, the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for

Excellence in Conservation in 2016 and in 2018 Josephine was awarded the Governor General's Meritorious Service Decoration in recognition for her contributions to Indigenous leadership and reconciliation. She also received honours from the Ontario Native Women's Association and the Great Lakes Guardian Council in 2019. It was an honour and most moving experience for me, with my sister, to have walked 10 kilometers with Josephine in 2006 as part of her water walk around Lake Ontario. I was/am so awe inspired by this most humble, spiritual woman. To date I am so respectful of, grateful for and careful with water."

March Celebrations!



Happy birthday to everyone celebrating a birthday this month including:

- **Corinne Santianni** on the 8th
- **Joan Beal** on the 30th



Congratulations to:

Valerie Lawson and husband Calvin celebrating their 40th anniversary on the 12th!

Dianne Williams and husband Paul celebrating their 46th anniversary on the 27th!

St. Joseph

Did you know that St. Joseph, adoptive father of Jesus, was declared the patron saint of Canada back in 1624 by Father Le Caron, a missionary in Canada known then as New France? The feast day of St. Joseph is March 19th.

Below is the link to the Knights of Columbus-produced documentary looking at the life of St. Joseph, and the lasting lessons he can offer us today. Written and directed by David Naglieri.

<https://www.kofc.org/en/news-room/st-joseph/index.html>



This campaign is underway with 3 collection Sundays scheduled for March 27th, May 1st, and June 5th.

Our parish goal has been set at \$73,000. Live the Gospel by providing for those in need. Please give generously.

Knights of Columbus Lottery

The Knights of Columbus continue to fundraise for their Ontario Charities Foundation through an online 50/50 lottery for 2022. Tickets are 15 for \$10, 40 for \$20 or

100 for \$40 for each quarterly draw. Ticket numbers are computer generated and emailed to the buyer. The first quarter jackpot draw takes place **March 31st**. The payout now prize stands at \$26,970! When ordering, there is a drop-down menu under "Organization" to choose the parish council you support – St. John's Council number is "Scarborough Beaches 7008".

For full details and to purchase your tickets go to: <https://www.kofcontario5050.com>

Synod on Synodality



From the Archdiocese of Toronto: "Pope Francis has launched the Synod on Synodality, an ambitious two-year global process of listening to the faithful."

He is "... asking every Catholic to help discern what the Holy Spirit is telling us at this moment as the Church enters its third millennium."

For details and to fill out the anonymous short survey, whether you have good or bad things to say about the Church, please visit:

<https://www.archtoronto.org/en/outreach/news/archdiocesan/the-synod-on-synodality-share-your-thoughts/>

April Calendar

- 3rd – Last day to drop off board games
- 8th – Way of the Cross - CWL Night
- 10th – Palm Sunday
- 11th - 17th – Holy Week
- 17th – Easter Sunday
- 22nd – Earth Day
- 24th – Divine Mercy Sunday
- 26th – Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel & Mass for deceased CWL members in our church 7:00 p.m.
- 28th/29th – 101st CWL Annual Toronto Diocesan Convention

Catholic Family Services

A wide variety of programs and services are offered through Catholic Family Services of Toronto. 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:
March virtue is Forgiveness.

- "Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots." (Luke 23:34)
- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (John 1:9)
- "Pray for someone you need to forgive." (Author unknown)
- "To err is human, to forgive is divine." (Alexander Pope)
- "If you can't forgive and forget, then pick one." (Author unknown)

Milk Bag Project

Maryse has found a crocheting partner in member Charmaine Woods. Please fold or roll the bags together instead of crinkling them up to make it easier for the cutting process.

Any that you have can be dropped off to the porch at either:

Maryse's house at **87 Coalport Drive** or Carmen's house at **66A Osborne Ave.**

Maryse is still asking for more members 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.

There is an immediate need for new and returning blood donors. The urgent need for blood continues in our healthcare system.

There are three permanent Canadian Blood Service centers in Toronto: 2 Bloor Street East, 67 College Street, and 163 King Street West. If you're in good health, please visit blood.ca to book an appointment and for the latest updates.

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/>

CWL Parish Contact Information

Maryse Ristuccia:

maryse.ristuccia@gmail.com 437-983-0557

Celestine Hall:

cf.hall@sympatico.ca 416-694-8922

Joan Beal:

joanbeal@rogers.com 416-693-4255

Corinne Santianni:

zed28@rogers.com 416-436-0300

Jenni Commanda:

cwajenni@rogers.com 647-346-2040

Dorothy Currie:

dorothy.ghosh@yahoo.com 416-804-1793

Krysia Theriault:

krysiatheriault@gmail.com 416-686-2742

Geri Crisci:

gcrisci@ckmconsultation.com 416-697-4544

Carmen Vanderreest:

vanderreestcarmen@gmail.com 416-691-5165