

Week of October 18, 2004

CWL builds parishes' community

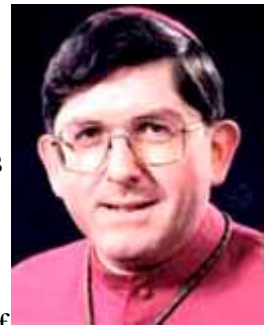
Collins encourages women to join Catholic Women's League

The Shepherd Speaks

By ARCHBISHOP THOMAS COLLINS

Christians serve God individually, but they are also invited to gather in groups in order more effectively to make the kingdom of God present in the world.

The most important community of disciples, of course, is the Church itself. But within the Church from time to time, and in the different local situations in which it exists, groups of disciples are established in order to serve the Gospel. In our Canadian experience of the Church, one of the most important of such groups is the Catholic Women's League.



The league is found in almost every parish, and without it much of the life of the Church would not be possible. The members of the league support us all through quiet prayer and service. They are like the women who made possible the very ministry of Our Lord himself.

Build community

One of our most pressing needs is the building up of community, and especially the strengthening of our parish communities. In most parishes, the activities that foster community are very much the work of the Catholic Women's League.

Our whole stewardship movement is intended to transform our parish life by inviting all parishioners to become more engaged in lives of active discipleship, sharing with others the gifts of time, talent, and treasure which they have received from God, and by that generosity showing gratitude for those gifts.

Long before the term stewardship became the symbol of a life of engaged discipleship, the members of the Catholic Women's League have shown the spirit of stewardship through their proactive initiatives of service and sharing. The league leads the way in stewardship, and as the stewardship movement enriches the Christian life of our parishes, as people are invited to choose one or more way of becoming involved, I trust that many women will choose membership in the league as a way in which they can most effectively express their commitment to active discipleship.

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Our society needs informed disciples of Jesus. One of the strengths of the Catholic Women's League is the way in which its members are encouraged to examine the challenges facing us in our society, in a spirit of study and prayer. The life of a member of the league, if it is truly to be spiritually fruitful, must be based on prayer and the thoughtful pondering of the Scriptures and the living faith of the Church, in both of which we encounter the Word of God, who is Jesus.

The voice of Christians must be heard, in a spirit of charity and clarity, proclaiming Gospel values in a world so much in need of them. One of the most powerful forces in our country for the proclamation of the Gospel on the national scene is the Catholic Women's League.

The league regularly brings before the powers of the state the concerns of Catholic women. It would be a foolish political leader indeed who would not heed the united voice of the Catholic women of Canada, as that is expressed through the Catholic Women's League.

Sadly, our political and judicial leaders are clearly most responsive to so many groups in our society that skillfully promote unwholesome values. There needs to be an equally effective voice proclaiming the way that leads to life and light, and the league provides that powerful voice. That same service can be offered on the more local level of diocese and parish.

Witness to Christ

Of course, one of the most powerful ways in which the league is a witness to Christ is in the quiet works of service which members offer, to the Catholic community and to all of those in need. At the Last Supper, especially as recounted in the Gospel of John, one of the ways Jesus showed us the profound significance of the Eucharist was in the washing of feet. That message of practical service is repeated in every parish through the selfless activity, as unheralded as it is indispensable, of the members of the league.

Thank you, members of the Catholic Women's League, for the witness of discipleship and stewardship which you offer to us all. I encourage the women of our parishes to join the league, and to discover in it a most effective way of serving Jesus by showing the love of God and neighbour not only in words but in apostolic action.
