

## Message from Our President

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### **Bernadette Schaefer**

In anticipation of our 66<sup>th</sup> MDCCW convention on June 13, I've been looking through the album of newspaper clippings, photos, and other mementos that date back to the organization meeting on March 30, 1954. That first meeting was held at St Bernard Church auditorium in Madison. In one photo, women wearing hats are seated at long rows of tables filling the auditorium, with little space to walk between rows. Looking at the picture, I sense the excitement and expectation permeating the room as women from all deaneries of the diocese gathered to organize the Madison Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual MDCCW convention was held in my home parish, St Clement, Lancaster on April 15, 1958, the centennial year of the apparitions of our Blessed Mother to Marie Bernadette Soubirous (my patron saint) at Lourdes, France. Bishop O'Connor selected the convention theme, "Mary Help of Christians," and named Our Lady of Lourdes patroness of the convention. His devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes went back to his early years as a priest when she responded to his request for a special favor. In 1919, after a touch of poison gas during WWI injured his voice, he made a pilgrimage to Lourdes. He promised Mary that if she would keep his voice in good condition, he would use it in the service of her Son. Thirty-nine years later he continued to fulfill that promise as first bishop of the Madison Diocese.

As I looked at the newspaper clippings of that convention, I was excited to recognize several people in the pictures and a couple of names in the articles. Reading about the junior choir singing at Mass reminded me of many times my friends and I gathered in the balcony of the church with Sr. Annarose, music teacher, choir director, organist, and my first violin teacher.

I was probably one of the singers that day in 1958.

I felt a surge of spiritual adrenaline while reading this sentence, "The Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes, one of the prayers with which Bishop O'Connor begins each day, will be printed on the reverse side of the convention holy cards."

The card was not saved, but the prayer is one I have prayed many times in moments of anxiety, fear, uncertainty, or to ask for a special favor. Most recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been praying it daily. Perhaps some of you would find it helpful so I am sharing it with you here. May Our Lady of Lourdes stay close to us and our families and help us put our trust in her Son during this difficult, stressful time.

### **Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes**

O ever Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Mercy, Health of the Sick, Refuge of Sinners, Comfort of the Afflicted, you know my wants, my troubles, my sufferings; deign to cast upon me a look of mercy. By appearing in the grotto of Lourdes, you were pleased to make it a privileged sanctuary whence you dispense your favors and already many sufferers have obtained the cure of their infirmities, both spiritual and corporal. I come, therefore, with the most unbounded confidence to implore your maternal intercession. Obtain, O loving Mother, the granting of my requests. Through gratitude for your favors I will endeavor to imitate your virtues that I may one day share your glory.  
Amen

## From Our Province Director

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**Paula Freimuth**

Dear sisters in Christ,

What can yet be said today about the COVID-19 pandemic that hasn't been said already? Our world as we have known it has stopped revolving with some worlds even becoming tilted as people we know have been sickened, or even passed away, because of this illness that has invaded our normalcy. *Our Sunday Visitor* writes, "It's been a true Lent of stripping away the gods and idols that we've subtly (intentionally and unintentionally) held before Jesus." Right now, women are looking at our Catholic organizations to see how we are reacting during this time. So how can we respond with hope and trust instead of fear and despair?

- Pick out a few council members, maybe past, present or even future council members and each day to contact by note or phone call to check in with them and thank them for them being members of your organizations.
- Send an email blast of one or two lines of encouragement once or twice a week. Bring the personal care factor back in a new way. Show your council members that your care.
- Pray. As Catholics, we have so many opportunities of different ways to pray that one will not be able to get weary of this practice.
- Go outside and decorate with faith-influenced décor. At this time, we should worry less about who we might offend and care more about who we might inspire.

When you do these small acts to help someone, even though you, yourself are struggling too, that's not help, that's love. Show the love.

Speaking of showing love, how about showing your love for your mother or other special women in your life on Mother's Day by remembering them at Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The form is on the NCCW website. Deadline is April 30.

Still continuing on about the extra time we have on our hands... peruse the NCCW website. There are so many wonderful things you and your council members can do from the comfort of your homes.

- Sign up for the **Friends with Pens Program** to write to an inmate through the Order of Malta. Information is under the Service Commission on the website.
- Preparing your organization's budget for the next year? Consider adding **the 100 for 100 Campaign**.
- Need help in planning the next Year of Service event? **Walking with Moms in Need** is a perfect fit.
- Make your future travel plans. Register for the NCCW Centennial Convention being held in Arlington, VA, Aug. 26-29 with the theme "A Vision for the Future."
- As you can see, our opportunities for being constructive with our extra time, showing hope and trust are endless. My wish and prayer to all of you is for strength through this difficult period of our lives.

Blessings to you today and always!

## From Our Spiritual Advisor

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**Msgr. Duane Moellenberndt**

Dear Members of the MDCCW,

As I write this (March 24) we are in the midst of the pandemic that has so changed every area of our lives. Obviously, at this point, we don't know where this will all lead and when our lives will be back to normal. I am reminded of what St. John Paul II said, "Do not abandon yourself to despair. We are Easter people and Alleluia is our song."

As we enter into the last couple of weeks of Lent and prepare for the glory of Easter, let us keep this quote of our late Holy Father in mind. No matter whether it is this current crisis that has engulfed the world, or our own personal challenges, hope is always the hallmark of the disciple of Christ.

By God's grace and mercy, we pray that this pandemic will be past then and that we can learn lessons from these days. Then we will go forward to celebrate our future as people of hope and as the Madison Diocesan Council of Catholic Women looking forward to the next 100 years.

God bless you!

## Leadership Commission

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**Sue Barker**

*Leadership Commission Chair*

How do we stay in touch and keep our members upbeat when we can't get together? A phone call, Email, or text helps to find out if everyone is staying healthy and positive. Possibly you share a prayer or an upbeat message too. What a life changer!! Fortunately, many of our churches have started to live-stream mass and other services. You will find an empty church with organ music, a priest at the altar, and empty pews may be eerie, but fills you with hope.

Until we can get together again, we need to think about events we will focus on when that happens. Maybe your next monthly meeting will involve a guest speaker who can mention a few things she did to stay sane, and group members can join in with their solutions. Maybe a potluck to celebrate being back in the world again. This may be a great time to invite a potential new member, that young mom or high school or college woman who has shown some interest.

As all our commissions and boards keep working towards future events, there is no reason local groups should stop planning either. Try a conference call or online group meeting and see how that works for you. We pray we never have to experience this again, but since God is in control, good leadership is a necessity! God Love You.

## Service Commission

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### Coreen Marklein

Service Commission Chair

While reviewing the “old” and “new” of the Council of Catholic Women, I came across a 2003 edition of NCCW’s Fall 2003 edition of the Bulletin Board. The Bulletin Board was a combined commission newsletter published twice a year. The edition provided a list of important dates with each month having a theme such as November – National Family Caregivers Month and February – Catholic Press Month. At that time there were several more commissions than our current three: Service, Leadership, and Spirituality.

Many of the articles and projects in 2003 are still relevant today: Water for Life, Habitat for Humanity, Pro-Life Message for teens, Nursing shortages, and domestic violence. The top five NCCW Legislative Issues in 2003 were: Respect Life, Health Care, Family Violence, Agriculture/Rural Life/Food/Water, and Welfare Reform. Do they sound familiar???

My Service Project for 2020 is the **Box of Joy** project through Cross Catholic Outreach (CCO). I hope to have as many vicariates take part in this worthy project and spread the project to your parishes and/or schools. In 2019, the Boxes of Joy project reached over 75,334 children in seven countries. Steps for the project:

1. Select a project leader. The project leader registers the group with CCO and requests materials.
2. Organize. The project leader will receive a kit from CCO with materials for a successful, faith-in-action activity.
3. Shop and pack the boxes. Each individual takes a Box of Joy and fills it using the suggestions offered in the Project Leader kit. Each box is labeled for a boy or girl in a pre-selected age group. A \$9 check is attached to the cover of the box to cover the cost of shipping.

4. Filled boxes of joy are brought by the Box of Joy group to a designated place.
5. Project Leader delivers Boxes of Joy to area’s Drop-off Center (to be determined).
6. Boxes are shipped to children in the greatest need around the world.

## Spirituality Commission

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### Mona Matijevich

Spirituality Commission Chair

### Lent 2020/Covid-19

I was so looking forward to a peaceful Lent this year; little did I know that we would experience a plague. Everything changed when we couldn't gather together in church or with our families.

We always said it would be great if we could attend Mass more often, and now we were blessed to have that chance. After our daily Bible readings, we turned on Relevant Radio for their wonderful programs. Then it was time for Fr. Rocky and Mass. We did the Divine Mercy Chaplet and the Stations of the Cross with thousands of other faithful Catholics.

I read Numbers 21:4-9; we all remember the story of Moses and the Israelites when they became disobedient, and the Lord sent snakes. The bronze snake was made; and when the Israelites were bitten, they only had to look up at the bronze snake and be healed. When I looked at my Bible's footnotes, it said the life-giving power of the snake anticipates the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, who was lifted up on the cross in order to bring life to all who look to him. I don't know about you, but I am looking to my loving Father more and more each passing day.

I was reminded of a favorite psalm passage. Psalm 34:19: “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.” In the footnotes, it says the suffering of the righteous must be counterbalanced by the revelation that the Lord wishes to deliver us out of all our troubles. When His purpose in permitting affliction is accomplished, He then

delivers us from them either by direct supernatural intervention in this life or by victorious death.

As a Catholic, heaven is where we all wish to go; our hope is that all of us will meet in heaven one day.

Before we knew it, holy week was here. I don't know about you, but I welcomed Jesus more than I have ever before. We missed receiving Jesus in the Eucharist; and when the churches are open, my prayer is that we flock together in support of our faith.

Blessings today and always!

## Membership

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**Sue Koch and Ellen Martin**  
Membership Co-Chairs

These are trying times during the coronavirus pandemic to be talking about membership and growing the number of members in our local affiliates, vicariates and diocese. It makes us think about the past 100 years since the NCCW beginnings and what turbulent times past members endured. World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War and Great Depression, just to name a few. These brought challenges and fear just as the times we are currently living in. We have also had outbreaks of many deadly diseases during that time such as Ebola, Swine flu, and others.

Our past members and the organization of the NCCW have endured as we will now. The membership connections the body of Catholic women have made in the past and will make in the future will help our organizations. Beginning with NCCW to the many affiliates, we will grow in numbers and in strength of conviction----"to support, empower and educate all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service."

As our membership term draws to an end, we are most pleased about two Madison diocesan vicariates taking an active role within the MDCCW community: Madison vicariate and

East Dane vicariate. We welcome all the women in these two vicariates and pray to Our Lady of Good Counsel that they will continue to grow in deep love and service to Our Lady and her Son.

We wish you all the best of health and great faith in our Lord Jesus and his mother to endure these turbulent times and to reach out to your sisters of MDCCW in daily prayer.

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## Editor's Notes

**Jane Lepeska Grinde**

As I finish putting together this newsletter, my thoughts turn to my memories of MDCCW and NCCW.

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in March (before social distancing started), I had the privilege of visiting with Jane Bernhardt, the oldest living past president of MDCCW. At 96, she is amazingly sharp and fit, living alone in a small house in Cassville, between the Mississippi River and the railroad tracks.

She moved to the river town in the corner of Grant County after marrying a graduate of the Marquette Dental School whom she met while she was a student there. The Milwaukee native found the church and its council of women to be a good social and spiritual outlet.

Similarly, my mother, Dorothy Lepeska, a Milwaukee native and Marquette graduate, ended up in Grant County five years earlier after taking a teaching job in Montfort. My mother married a farmer and found her first house in 1943 to be one without indoor plumbing on the top of a hill several miles from the nearest town.

These two women became fast friends in the 1950s through the council. Both were journalism graduates, and both became correspondents for the *Catholic Herald*, MDCCW newsletter editors, and MDCCW presidents. Jane continues writing for the *Catholic Herald* and local newspapers. I followed my mother as a CH correspondent and newsletter editor.

Over the years, I was fortunate to get to know a number of my mother's friends in council. She absolutely loved the council and attending the conventions and partying at those conventions. When I talked with Jane Bernhardt about the convention, she concurred that socializing was an important part of the convention. After all, she said even Jesus liked to have a good time.

My mother was born the same month and year as the National Council; she passed away in 2014, but to her credit she attended the MDCCW convention that year and a board meeting just a couple of months before her passing. My siblings thought I was going beyond the call of duty to make sure my mother got to those meetings, but truth to be told, I was the fortunate one.

Thank you NCCW and MDCCW for enriching my life.

Oh, by the way, if you haven't already, check out the April 2 *Catholic Herald* for a story on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NCCW.

I give my love and gratitude to the many faith-filled Council women!

## Celebrate NCCW's 100th Year at the 2020 Convention

WASHINGTON, D.C.-- The National Council of Catholic Women will celebrate its 100th Anniversary in Arlington, VA, Aug. 26-29, with the theme *A Vision for the Future*.

Wisconsin's own Jean Kelly will preside at the convention which will bring together Catholic women of all ages to discover NCCW's rich history and its vision for the future through inspiring conferences, daily liturgies, informative exhibits, and fun events.

"Convention is an exceptional opportunity to learn, pray, and celebrate the unique gifts of women as we look to the future, transforming the world through fulfilling our mission to support, empower and educate all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service," said NCCW President Jean Kelly who is past

province director for Wisconsin and past Milwaukee Archdiocesan CCW president.

The convention site is Crystal Gateway Marriott, located minutes away from Reagan National Airport and a short metro ride to downtown Washington D.C., the Arlington Cemetery, Pentagon City, and Old Town Alexandria.

## Speakers at the 2020 Convention include:

### His Eminence, Timothy Cardinal

**Dolan**, Archbishop of New York, who will give the keynote address and celebrate the opening Mass.

**Abby Johnson**, internationally known pro-life activist, who will receive the 2020 NCCW Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Gloria Purvis**, the creator and host of the popular EWTN TV series, "Authentically Free at Last."

Early bird registration received by May 29 is \$300. The rate goes to \$350, with the closing date for registration July 31. For information, go to the website for the National Council of Catholic Women: [www.nccw.org](http://www.nccw.org).

*Editor's note. The following article on one of the general session speakers from the 2019 convention was inadvertently left out of the 2019 fall/winter newsletter. This is an example of what you might hear at a national convention.*

## 2019 NCCW General Session Speaker: Kim Michael Polote

### By Coreen S. Marklein

Kim Michael Polote sang and gave her presentation: Divine Shopping Spree . . . Being a Kept Woman in His Word.

Kim began the program by singing "How Great Thou Art" and invited the women to join in. Her voice was amazing, and Kim used humor and inspiration to keep the audience entertained.

Kim indicated she has been a kept woman since age 18; that is, “a kept woman in the Word.” She talked about shopping sprees. When she was down, she would go shopping and “somehow it would make me feel better.”

She used humor to describe her shopping trip with her mother for her wedding gown. She started with a disclaimer: If you’re trying on an outfit and it takes two people to help you get into that outfit, it is possible that you should not purchase that outfit.

Kim had set her sights on one specific dress, and she was only going to do what she could to wear the dress only one day. Kim was introduced to spanx, but she realized that her own actions hindered her embracing the gown in the manner that she wanted.

Her marriage failed twice; however, she would not have traded the marriage. She said that to this day, she loves that man “for showing me so many lessons” and for their children. Her ex-husband taught her about not giving up and about what not to believe.

Kim cited Scriptures throughout her talk. From Ephesians 6:10-20 and 6:10-18, she said, “We need to be strong and put on the full armor of God. We will never be fulfilled as long as we do not protect ourselves. Sometimes we want to, but we can’t. We need to look into the pain of our past to define us. The first piece of armor is the truth.”

Kim invited each of us to cover ourselves with the Word – don’t leave home without covering yourself with the Word. Tell yourself the truth. Use the shield of faith to extinguish the flames of the evil ones. It doesn’t mean you have to understand everything. We just have to trust.

Some of her final points included:

- You just may be surprised at how the ones you see fit to judge - also judge you. And, the way we judge others says more about ourselves than the ones we judge. At the end of the day, there is only one true judge...and it's not any of us.
- Don't be a person that stands in judgement, be a person that is a walking example! Unmistakably, I am a kept woman.
- Jesus Christ – nothing is counterfeit about His promises.
- Love like Christ loves you. You are going to be given a lot of lemons, but make lemonade.
- Divine shopping spree: show others what they can have for free.

## Encouraging NCCW Convention Attendance

At its spring board meeting, the MDCCW agreed to encourage each vicariate to offer the early registration fee of \$300 (by May 29) to one first-time attendee to the national convention. The MDCCW will match that with a \$100 gift.

The goal is to have one first-time attendee from each vicariate who will receive \$400 to help cover the cost. The board encourages vicariate and parish councils that can do more to do so to “encourage all members to consider attending the convention. Celebrating 100 years at the national convention will generate lots of excitement and enthusiasm for the work of NCCW.”

## 66<sup>th</sup> Annual MDCCW Convention

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### Cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

With concerns about the health and safety of our members during this pandemic, the MDCCW board voted by email to cancel the 66<sup>th</sup> annual convention scheduled for June 13, 2020. The board will meet virtually May 16 to elect officers and conduct other business. In recognition of the work done by the convention planning committee, chaired by Rosa Ropers, West Dane Vicariate president, we are including information about the cancelled convention.

### President's Convention Message

**Bernadette Schaefer**

Five years ago, at the National Council of Catholic Women Convention in Orlando, it became my dream to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NCCW at our Diocesan Convention in 2020. Since becoming president in 2018 I have been looking forward to welcoming you to our convention and birthday celebration. Now, instead, I have to announce that our convention and celebration have been cancelled.

At the convention, I wanted to personally thank all for the work our parish and vicariate councils are doing, and to ask you to imagine the many and varied ways members of NCCW have served during the past 100 years.

How many charitable projects have been created and supported in our country and in countries struggling with poverty? How many diocesan and parish needs have been addressed by the Council of Catholic Women? How many seminarians, priests, and sisters have received encouragement and support? How many First Communicants, altar servers, confirmands, and high school graduates have been honored?

How many pregnant women have been helped and encouraged? How many people have been given opportunities to deepen their understanding of the Catholic Faith?

How many Masses, rosaries, Divine Mercy Chaplets, and other prayers have been prayed by the women of CCW? How many people have been blessed by those prayers? How many spiritual advisors have inspired us and strengthened our faith? How many women have responded to the need for leadership and contributed to the strength of their councils?

The questions could go on and on. If we had a way of tracking all the work done and all the people uplifted by the national council and diocesan councils, we would be astonished! For 100 years this work in the Lord's vineyard has continued in dioceses and parishes throughout the country and abroad.

This is truly an occasion to celebrate! May God bless us as we honor the past, enjoy the present, and look forward to continuing our work in the future. Let the celebration begin!

### Officers to Be Elected at May 16 Virtual Board Meeting

President Bernadette Schaefer will convene the MDCCW board virtually on May 16 to elect the officers of president-elect and secretary.

On the advice of Carol Brennan, MDCCW parliamentarian, the board first must "vote to give the board the authority this year to elect officers at our teleconference board meeting instead of the assembly of members at our convention due to circumstances beyond our control."

Linda Ripp is a candidate for president-elect, and Carol Brennan is a candidate for secretary. Nominations will also be accepted at the teleconference. President-elect Judy Lyons moves up to president; and Katie Crosby, elected last year for a two-year term as treasurer, will continue for another year.

Msgr. Duane Moellenberndt, MDCCW spiritual advisor, will install the officers virtually.



## **Judy Lyons, Incoming President**

After serving a two-year term as president-elect, Judy Lyons will be installed as president. A member of St. Joseph Parish, Fort Atkinson, she also serves as Jefferson Vicariate CCW president.

Judy moved four years ago from the Superior Diocese to Fort Atkinson where two of her daughters live. She and her husband had been active members of Cathedral of Christ the King Parish, Superior, where they were RCIA leaders. Judy, a retired librarian, also served as a trainer for liturgical ministers, taught preschool Sunday school, and worked for the parish as director of ministries and other assorted odd jobs.

## **Linda Ripp, President-Elect Nominee**

A life-long member of St Martin of Tours Parish, Martinsville, Linda has been an active member of CCW for over 30 years. She served as president and secretary at the parish level and as West Dane president. She currently is MDCCW secretary and West Dane Vicariate leadership chair. She attended her first NCCW Convention in 2014 in Michigan and went to Indianapolis in 2016.

She and her husband are parents of two sons one of whom passed away in his sleep of an undiagnosed heart condition in November 2018. Their younger son was married in August 2019 so now she has a daughter. Linda is a preschool teacher in Middleton.

## **Carol Brennan, Secretary Nominee**

Most recently NCCW province director for Wisconsin, Carol joined CCW 20 years ago when she moved to Berlin. She has served in positions at all levels of council, including Milwaukee Province director and MDCCW president. As province director, she represented Wisconsin on the NCCW board.

A retired registered nurse, Carol and her husband John have two daughters and a son who are all married and have "blessed them with six grandchildren and one angel."

## **Gratitude to West Dane Vicariate CCW for Work**

Rosa Ropers, president of the West Dane Vicariate CCW, co-chaired the 66<sup>th</sup> MDCCW Convention planning committee with Joan Pregler and Ann Wagner.

Parishes and individual members within the West Dane Vicariate were invited to participate in the planning, and many were very generous with their sharing of their time and talents, said Rosa.

Special thanks go to committee chairs: Alice Banier, Kelly Huntington, Barbara Unger, Kathy Wall, Sue Barker, Linda Ripp, Becky Frederick, Laura Petranek Arneson, and all those who volunteered for leadership roles.

A past MDCCW president, Ropers said the committee wants to thank Anna Nuzzo, Jeanne Ewing, and Bishop Donald J. Hying for their understanding and cooperation with the postponement.

Anna Nuzzo, an acclaimed international Catholic singer, songwriter, and recording artist, was scheduled to provide music throughout the day starting during registration. Her website is [www.annanuzzo.com](http://www.annanuzzo.com).

Catholic spiritual writer Jeanne Ewing was set to speak on "Joyful Celebrations" following the business meeting. In her work, she focuses on the topics of grief, redemptive suffering, and waiting. Her website is [www.annanuzzo.com](http://www.annanuzzo.com).

Bishop Donald Hying was chosen to deliver the keynote speech and homily at the Mass. The bishop provides a daily inspirational message on YouTube, accessible through the diocesan website ([www.madisondiocese.org](http://www.madisondiocese.org)) and Facebook page.

The committee looks forward to 2021 when the convention will take place, once again, "when we can celebrate all the good that has been done and acknowledge all that still needs to be done while honoring our Lord."