

Message from Our President

Judy Lyons

My Dear CCW Sisters,

I hope this finds you, your families, and friends well. As this strange, challenging, and basically unprecedented year is drawing to a close, I am reminded of the lines from Charles Dickens, ***A Tale of Two Cities***: *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.*

The way we did things a year ago has, in many ways, changed dramatically. And we took so many things for granted...

The list of the events of 2020 is long: wildfires, hurricanes, tornados, extensive flooding, divisive elections, looting and pillaging, and more. It seems overwhelming! We have suffered isolation from family, friends, and church; and economic woes.

'Reset' Time

But through it all, there are things I count in the "good" column. It has been a time to reprioritize, regroup, and adapt. My sometimes-frenetic schedule slowed to a crawl. I have more time for prayer. And, I find that I have had to find different ways to accomplish things — adapt. In some ways, I see this as a gigantic "reset" event.

Ladies, we have made it this far which is cause for hope in our future. We are a people of hope. In our natural human condition, it is so very easy to get our priorities skewed. Now is the perfect opportunity to realign them, reprioritize them. We must ask, what is really important? How are we called to serve God and our sisters and brothers under these

conditions? How do we accomplish that in these difficult and different times? These are the questions we must address and bring to God and the saints in prayer.

Our prayer lives have been given an opportunity to expand and mature. It is a time for spiritual and personal growth. The question is how will we proceed?

One of our greatest challenges is just keeping in touch. Remember: Christ has no hands but ours! We are called to love one another, to help one another, to pray for one another. Keep in touch with your folks!

Grateful for your work

I am profoundly grateful and amazed at the things we have been able to accomplish, despite the necessary restrictions around us. A style show that happened virtually; Boxes of Joy that have been filled; and so many other works of compassion, mercy, and love.

Sisters, you are amazing and awesome. I know that our Lady of Perpetual Help and the Holy Spirit have our backs and our hearts, helping us to move forward in the work we do. I along with everyone else look forward to some normalcy in our lives and activities, but let us be thankful for the opportunities brought about by our current situation.

With the coming of Advent, may we truly prepare for and embrace the birth of our Lord and Savior.

Blessings, health, and peace to you in this most holy season.

From Our Spiritual Advisor

Msgr. Duane Moellenberndt

Dear Members of the Madison Diocesan Council of Catholic Women,

As we know the Season of Advent is very much a time of waiting and expectation. This was true of the first Advent and is true of every Advent Season since the coming of Jesus 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem.

Each week in Advent we light the Advent wreath candles marking the passage of time until we reach the Solemnity of Christmas. This Advent 2020 is certainly different from any previous Advent you and I have celebrated. This is indeed an understatement.

In our current Advent, we are waiting for, longing for, anticipating, and expecting a vaccine so that life can be a bit more normal again — soon, please God! Perhaps more than any other Advent, this year we can experience better than ever what people felt prior to the birth of Jesus so long ago as they waited for the coming of the Messiah.

May our current health situation remind us more deeply in our hearts the truth of what happened at the first Christmas. Emmanuel came. Emmanuel means “God is with us.” That is as true today for you and me as it was when Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds welcomed Jesus in the stable so long ago.

From Our Province Director

Paula Freimuth

My dear sisters in Christ,

As a women’s organization, we are always helping: Helping reach the women in our church pews, helping victims of domestic violence through our Let’s Lick Family Violence program, and helping children enjoy Christmas through the NCCW Boxes of Joy program.

Helping others fulfills some of our basic needs such as connecting with others and seeing how our actions make a positive difference. Those are the areas that help

define a meaningful life. A meaningful life isn’t found, but created through our actions.

Below are service ideas leading into the holidays that can be done by an individual, family, or as a group project and adapted for any time of the year. Please share your details with me of how you accomplished the task so that I may share them with other Catholic women’s organizations.

1. Virtual Guests. Ask a retirement home or nursing home which residents never receive visitors and ask to set up window visits, video calls, or a regular old phone call. Call once a month to read, chat, and listen. Once a month contact one of your own members who has been couped up or one of your parishioners whom you haven’t seen in the pews for a while.
2. Adopt a Missionary. Learn about the people and the culture where the missionary serves. Communicate regularly and ask for needs. Share the needs and gather the items for a care package.
3. Sleigh Bells. Plan a special delivery to people in your community who work on Christmas Eve, such as emergency personnel, convenience store clerks, and hospital personnel. They’ll be encouraged by simple gifts like cookies or handwritten cards.

The need doesn’t stop just with your area. Our NCCW organization has been a victim of the COVID-19. Consider making a tax-deductible donation to the NCCW as a Gift of Sustainability. Consider shopping through smile.amazon.com. Add NCCW as the charity of your choice, and NCCW will get 0.5% of your purchase price at no cost to you.

Are you looking for that special gift for a Catholic woman? The NCCW has created Santa’s Special Surprise Bundles. These bundles are a variety of fun products to celebrate the season. For more information on any of these items, or to view the 2019-

2020 updated NCCW strategic plan, please go to the NCCW website, www.nccw.org/.

During this 2020 holiday season, let us be thankful for everyone and everything we have in our lives. Some of us may not be rich in money or jewels, but we can be thankful for what we have. Be it the food on our table or the familiar faces around our table. Be it the warmth of our hearth or the warmth of our grandchild's hugs. Be it feeling safe in our bed at night or feeling secure knowing we have a wonderful friend. Whatever it is, let us be joyful and thankful.

Let's all pray that December is a month filled with healing, blessings, growth, new opportunities, love and recover from all that is going on in our world today.

Leadership Commission

Sue Barker

Leadership Commission Chair

Leadership is more important than ever. These last nine months have been a challenge for everyone, and we have no end in sight! Most events have been canceled because of mandates to stay home and limited numbers when you do gather. Who knew we would become "experts" at Zoom or Google meetings as a way to keep our contacts going?

Many of us have gotten to the point where we have to get together, safely, and just re-establish that human contact. This may involve a meeting or just seeing someone after months of calling or texting. Some groups are putting together a newsletter to keep their members informed.

St. Christopher Parish/St. Andrew Church CCW women have been blessed to have had meetings in August and October, wearing our masks and distancing. Our "crafters," who work through the year towards our bazaar, have been safely meeting once a week. At our meetings we

covered issues that were needed and decided to hold our Christmas/Holiday Bazaar Nov. 14 and 15. This included a bake sale with all items packaged. We couldn't have our usual luncheon, but it went well. People followed all the rules and were extremely happy to have some place to go!

Find your own way to stay in touch with group members, so when our lives attain some form of normalcy, we will know we did as much as we could to stay active. Remember, God is still in charge, so pray that we may "Let Go and Let God."

Service Commission

Coreen Marklein

Service Commission Chair

The Boxes of Joy Service Project through Cross Catholic Outreach (CCO) for 2020 was a great success. This was my first year with this project.

I initially ordered 300 gift boxes from CCO and then ordered additional gift boxes. I met with the Vicariate presidents during August and September and dropped off their boxes of joy. I met with Rosa Ropers and Jane Grinde in Waunakee when I dropped off the boxes for West Dane Vicariate. I also met with Ellen Dargel, Sauk; Jan Block, Grant; and Mona Matijevich, Columbia North. Jane Grinde wrote an excellent article for the *Catholic Herald*, published in the Oct. 14 issue.

Some parishes and their CCWs elected to send monies for the project instead of distributing and collecting individual boxes. The parishes made out the checks to MDCCW so that we could keep a record. MDCCW Treasurer Katie Crosby will be providing me with one check, payable to COO. Total monies received from donations were \$590, of which approximately \$100 was used for boxes filled but which did not include checks.

Boxes were delivered to our drop-off site at St. Peter Church, Ashton, during the week or on collection weekend Nov. 14 and 15. Michelle LeVeque from St. Peter and I packed the individual boxes in the larger crate boxes per diagram. The tally of boxes through Nov. 15 was 575 boxes. With the addition of the 150 boxes from All Saint Parish in Berlin, whose council took their boxes to the Oshkosh, our total was 725 Boxes.

I will be working with Jane Grinde and Michelle LeVeque to write a project wrap-up and thank you article for The Catholic Herald. I have parishes and groups eager to do this project again next year — so I will continue the Boxes of Joy project at least one more year for the Diocese of Madison. Thank you to all who contributed in any way to make this project a success.

Other Service Projects Ideas

- Prepare birthday bags for food pantries (cake mix, frosting, card, miscellaneous items).
- Adopt a family in need for the Christmas Season or for the new year.
- Set up a contact list of CCW members. Contact them during pandemic to see how they are doing and offer comfort.
- Become a pen pal. Send greeting cards, note cards, etc. to local nursing homes, assisted living, correctional institutions, etc. So many individuals will welcome your notes of kindness.

Spirituality Commission

Mona Matijevich

Spirituality Commission Chair

You're thankful for what? 2020 is sure going down in the history books for one wild ride, and it isn't over yet. Our lives have not returned to normal, and we still don't have a cure.

We spent Thanksgiving alone, missing our families more than ever. But we did it for our future, unsure what it will be like. My husband and I woke up Thanksgiving morning and looked at each other and said, "Let's go to church." We quickly dressed in our Sunday best and off we went. On the way we said a Rosary and talked about our blessings.

We didn't feel alone because our Lord was with us every step of the way. We were reminded of St. Padre Pio's advice "pray, hope, and don't worry."

I write this at the start of the Advent season, a time to prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. This year more than ever, we will have the time to devote to our prayer lives. Reflect more on the meaning of what Christmas is all about. Read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to touch you and give you the Wisdom needed to get closer to our Lord.

Let us not forget the Rosary, Divine Mercy, and prayers. Make this a Christmas to remember!!!

Next year the MDCCW will start a postcard campaign to pray for our priests, starting on Holy Thursday.

During Holy Week with the permission of our priest we will be handing out postcards with the name of a priest for whom we will be praying for the whole year.

We all need prayers, but especially our beloved priests. Sometimes we get irritated when Mass doesn't start on time, but we don't know that he just received a call from a parishioner dying or in the hospital. So many things happen that we never know about or realize. We may only see our priest on Sundays, but he has a schedule full of appointments. Even on his day off, he might have a funeral or need to prepare one. He is always on the go, putting our needs first.

When you receive the postcard, it will have the priest's name and address on the front; you will sign your name on the back of the

card and mail it to him. If you want to send other cards to him throughout the year, that is up to you.

Know that I am praying you and your family have a Blessed Christmas.

National Council of Catholic Women Celebrates 100 Years

The NCCW Mission is to Support, Empower, and Educate all Catholic women in Spirituality, Leadership and Service

Editor's note. The August 2020 NCCW convention was to have been the big birthday celebration for the national council, presided over by Wisconsin's own Jean Kelly. While that didn't happen, the birthday is still one to celebrate and will be celebrated at the next in-person convention. Because Carol Brennan is past MDCCW president, a former NCCW board member as province director, at-tendee at past national conventions, and is now MDCCW secretary, I asked her to write about the history of NCCW.

By Carol Brennan MDCCW Secretary

It is a challenge to condense 100 years of NCCW into a short article for this newsletter. Much of the information is gleaned from the National Council of Catholic Women 100 Years anniversary book.

The same year that women received the right to vote saw the start of NCCW.

Founded by the U.S. Catholic bishops, NCCW's purpose "was to give Catholic women a common voice and an instrument for united action — not to replace the work of any existing woman's group, but rather to stimulate their growth and unify them."

At its founding, there were more than 5,000 Catholic women's organizations nationwide — organizations that would eventually become the first NCCW affiliates.

First Assembly, March 1920

The first gathering brought together nearly 200 Catholic women from around the country on March 4, 1920, in Washington, DC, "to unite and fortify their efforts in service to God and the Church."

Among those women were 10 from Wisconsin: Mrs. John Bardon, Superior; Mrs. J. Hugh Hackett, Milwaukee; Miss Katharine Hayes, La Cross; Miss Mary E. Langan, Milwaukee; Mrs. John F. Martin, Green Bay; Mrs. James E. Mehan, Milwaukee; Mrs. John T. Murphy, Superior; Mrs. Ernest S. Schmidt, Green Bay; Mrs. August Springob, Milwaukee; Mrs. Floyd H. Turnbull, Milwaukee. (Madison Diocese did not exist.)

It seems Wisconsin has always had an abundance of faith-filled women willing to give of their time, talent, and treasure to serve God, the church, and society where needed.

Told to do things "on a big scale and in a national way," the delegates in just three days drafted a constitution, by-Laws, meeting protocols, and programs. Fourteen were elected to the first board, including Mrs. Hackett of Milwaukee.

Prior to calling for the organization of the national council, bishops were amazed at the work of women and their organizations during WWI — how they rallied, stepped up, and went to work in factories, filling in for men sent to war — as well as taking care of everyone at home.

The first 25 years, 1920-1945, NCCW

- emphasized education and formation of Catholic women;
- focused on promoting Catholic education;

- created and funded the National Catholic School of Social Services in D.C., now housed at Catholic University of America;
- promoted social justice and world peace;
- affiliated with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO).

The second 25 years, 1945-1970, NCCW reached out to the needs of people in countries devastated by war. In 1945 they formed a partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) which continues today. By the fall of 1946 over 600,000 pounds of clothing were sent to relief services.

Today, we support The Madonna Plan to help mothers and children, Water for Life to provide safe drinking water, Help A Child, and more. In 1995 CRS awarded NCCW a certificate for Outstanding Achievement in contributing \$1 Million for Water for Life.

We have contributed millions of dollars to CRS programs, and these donations have come from you ladies and your organizations in the parishes. Currently a very popular program is Boxes of Joy through Cross Catholic Outreach.

Since 1971 we have partnered with many other organizations and have developed programs and materials about human trafficking, domestic violence, pornography, Vocation Purse Club, mentoring, respite care, and We Are Called to evangelize; promoted life, mini retreat resources, prayers and rosary services, leadership training and much more to help us become "the best version of ourselves." Information on these can be found at our website www.nccw.org/.

Communication is always changing. Currently we have Catholic Woman magazine, Connect electronic newsletter, monthly membership calls, monthly rosary calls, NCCW website, and Facebook.

We have a representative to the U.N. Our president attends the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Assemblies. Our NCCW past president, Maribeth Stewart Blogoslovski, is vice president general of

World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations. Our current NCCW president, Jean Kelly, is from Wisconsin—first person from Wisconsin to be elected to this position. NCCW represents all of us.

The following are some excerpts from the NCCW anniversary book's foreword written by Most Reverend Gregory Parkes, Episcopal Liaison to NCCW at the time of publication:

- At every stage, times of war, peace, domestic turmoil, members of NCCW have met the needs of their families, parishes, communities, country, and world with selfless dedication, focused education and successful programs, important advocacy, inspiring prayer, and strong leadership.
- NCCW has had at its heart a focus and drive to inspire, include, and unite all Catholic women of our country... as they achieve extraordinary and dedicated service grounded in their Catholic faith.
- Members of NCCW have consistently met their mandate to address the needs of the times with effective service. They have courageously and gently guided American Catholic women to be empowered, to take an active role in their Church and communities, always with a positive spirit grounded in their Catholic faith, and our U.S. Church is so much better because of them.
- Dedication to their mission... the members of the NCCW for one hundred years have been an inspiration and example of living the Beatitudes, of encouraging others, of offering help wherever needed, of being what Catholic lay women are at their finest.

I think Bishop Parks says it all. Through the years our basic mission has remained the same: assessing and addressing current needs with Gospel values — just our faces have changed. We have women across the nation representing us. We are and do remain Women of Prayer, Women of Action.

2021 MDCCW Convention

Rosa Ropers

West Dane Vicariate President

The West Dane Vicariate is looking forward to welcoming you to our 2021 conference this summer. We missed seeing you in June but promise to make 2021 a conference to remember as we celebrate 100 years (actually 101 by now), safe from Covid 19, and thanking God for who we are and what we do.

We are considering a virtual agenda as well as in person. Regardless of the final decision, please give this event a priority to attend. We plan on making it as easy as possible for all attendees to participate.

More information will be available in March as to the time and date and the type of venue that will be offered to us for gathering as Catholic women to share our faith stories with one another.

A Brighter Future for Moms in Need

In an effort to help women with unplanned pregnancies as well as parents facing challenges of parenting, the U.S. bishops in 2019 announced their support of Walking with Moms in Need. Meant to be a year-long service project, the effort was delayed because of the pandemic and is now getting a restart in the Madison diocese through the efforts of Susanna Herro.

“To help Bishop Hying achieve an active Walking with Moms in Need effort,” said Susanna, “we are looking for women and men who are willing to learn a little more about their parish and their community and share what they find that can help Moms in Need.”

The Pro-Life Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is developing educational, pastoral, and action-oriented resources for parish use, such as:

- Tools for documenting an inventory of local resources for pregnant mothers in need.
- Ideas for improving parish responses.
- Prayers for building a culture of life and a civilization of love.
- Reflections on the teachings of *Evangelium vitae*, *Evangelii gaudium*, and *Laudato si'*.

Every parish is encouraged to assess the pastoral and practical assistance currently available to pregnant moms and families, including identifying local pregnancy help resources and identifying gaps in services.

According to statistics from abortion providers, women who choose abortion were poor, young and unmarried: 75% were low income, 60% were in their twenties, and 86% were unmarried.

Those interested in helping can contact Susanna Herro at 608-255-2020 or susannaherro@gmail.com.

Find out more about it at www.walkingwithmoms.com.

Wisconsin Bishops Support Rally for Life

Pro-life advocates from around the Midwest will gather in multiple locations leading up to the March for Life Chicago scheduled for Jan. 23. The “Moving the Movement” tour will begin with a kick-off event in Madison Saturday, Jan. 2,

Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), Wisconsin Family Council, Wisconsin Right to Life, and Pro-Life Wisconsin are supporting the rallies.

The Madison rally is part of a tour that will span five states, stopping at several separate locations. At each stop, speakers will address the “affliction of abortion, which destroys unborn babies, and harms parents,” said the media release from WCC. “Participants will also hear inspiring stories and a rallying cry to unite with their neighbors throughout the Midwest in actively defending life.”

The rallies will include a diaper drive to benefit local pregnancy resource centers. The goal is to collect 130,094 diapers, the average number of babies aborted each year in the Midwest.

The Madison event will begin with an afternoon car rally at the Aliant Energy Center parking lot. The Midwest tour will culminate at the March for Life Chicago Jan. 23.

To register and to receive updates, go to marchforlifechicago.org/tour.

Rural Concerns

Tom Nelson

Diocesan Rural Life Coordinator

Advent Greetings to my friends of MDCCW. It's a pleasure to communicate with you once again.

As the recently appointed diocesan rural life coordinator, I have been asked to update your organization about the redevelopment of a concentrated Rural Life effort in the diocese under Bishop Hying.

With an ever increasing worldwide need for food, it is alarming to watch the continuous eroding of our agricultural base across the bread/corn basket of our nation. While being more productive than ever before, farmers face plunging dairy and meat prices, with

higher costs of production, leading too many to financial failure.

In a diocese where 10 of our 11 counties are considered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as rural, we need to be focused on how and what we can do as individuals, families, and communities — secular and faith-based rural and urban — to work toward a more sustainable farm economy.

Bishop Donald has shown a remarkable understanding of the need for our Catholic community across the diocese to take action to help those who perform the most basic and necessary vocation to our world as providers of our “daily bread.”

Listening Sessions

The first action step is to hold Rural Life Listening sessions across our diocese. Originally scheduled for November, we had to put them on hold due to the pandemic, but they will be rescheduled as soon as we are able to safely gather. A Diocesan Rural Life Mass of celebration is scheduled at St. Lawrence Church, Jefferson, for May 15 to coincide with the Feast Day of St. Isidore, patron saint of Farming.

We need to remember that when rural families struggle so does the rural parish family. Organizations such as MDCCW have had strong connections to rural concerns over the years, and I ask you to consider reviving that effort. One way to do that is to preserve the rich food legacies of our parish family events. Over the years I have collected parish cookbooks to save recipes from our family kitchens that celebrate our food culture. Please share with me your cookbooks and stories.

You can also help by identifying members of your family or parish community who are knowledgeable of farming or rural community development and interested in serving as rural parish liaison contacts. Let me know if you or someone else is interested by contacting me at tomnelson.art@gmail.com or 608/438-7154.

Editor's Notes

Jane Lepaska Grinde

MDCCW Secretary

Thank you to those who submitted articles for this newsletter. All have something to offer for our reflection. Since the newsletter deadline was Nov. 30, before the start of Advent, each one appropriately makes note of this season of "waiting."

Karen Gramann, our talented graphic designer, and I obviously need time to edit and format the newsletter and then distribute to you, either via email or by U.S. mail. While it may be days or even weeks after Advent by the time you take the time to read the newsletter, we hope the messages will still give you pause for reflection and prayer.

This year, my parish Good Shepherd in Madison offered its annual bilingual "Journey to Light" celebration virtually. The readings and music featured the Blessed Mother with a special focus on the beautiful Magnificat prayer. I remember our retired pastor, Msgr. Tom Baxter, talking about it in one of his homilies and urging us to pray it daily. I must admit I never did, but maybe now I will start.

Gratitude to Msgr. Duane

I want to recognize our spiritual advisor, Msgr. Duane, for his continuing service to MDCCW. After 44 years as a priest, the last 26 as pastor of Sacred Hearts, Sun Prairie, Msgr. Duane retired this summer. Happily, the retirement doesn't mean his retirement from MDCCW nor from helping parishes in the diocese.

I asked Msgr. Duane to share memories and reflections on his service which began 26 years at the 1994 MDCCW convention when Bishop William Bullock appointed him along with Fr. Loren "Larry" Bowens as spiritual advisor.

Msgr. Duane had attended CCW Masses and meetings prior to his appointment, so he knew about the organization and how it worked.

Over the years, he said, "I have enjoyed my time with the MDCCW and have always found the leadership as well as the women at the host parishes very supportive, cooperative, and dedicated. They have a sincere love of the Church plus are most willing to reach out to those in need in a variety of ways in the Diocese and beyond."

Joy to be with Members

His greatest enjoyment, he said, has been "attending the Masses and gatherings after the Mass (especially the dinners). It was a joy to be able to be with and meet so many dedicated Catholics. Installing the next group of leaders for the CCW every two years has been an honor."

The only national convention he attended was the one in Detroit. "We took a bus to travel there and so had many good times on the bus as well as at the convention. The convention was inspirational and a valuable learning experience." After that convention he became a caregiver for his parents so wasn't able to leave and attend any other convention.

About Fr. Larry who served with him until his untimely death five years ago, Msgr. Duane said, "We worked together very well, and I believe made a good team. He was always a delight to be with and plan events together."

Optimism

Acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining membership and enthusiasm for taking on leadership positions, Msgr. Duane said, "The commitment to Church just is not as strong as it once was in years past. However, in most instances someone has stepped forward to lead — sometimes after having done so in years past. I think we

may have turned the corner in membership, too. So, I am positive and optimistic.”

Always a strong supporter and advocate for the council, Msgr. Duane wrote, “MDCCW is

a gift to the Church, and I have been honored to have been a small part of this fine and wonderful group of people for these many years.”