

DECEMBER 2025

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NCCW's HISTORY from
1970 to the Present



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Connecting Catholic Women!

A Monthly Newsletter of the Madison Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (MDCCW)

Affiliated with the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) and your local parish Council (CCW)

Uniting Catholic Women throughout the Catholic Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin

THE PEN

"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." Psalm 127:1

Building the Body of Christ

December is dedicated to the **Divine Infant Jesus**, we prepare for His birth all month and celebrate His birth in Bethlehem on **Christmas, Dec. 25**. The Church observes the **season of Advent** during the first four weeks of Dec. to prepare for the birth of the **Divine Infant Jesus** on Christmas, Dec. 25.

History of Advent: In the early church (300 - 600) both the French and Spanish prepared for the feast of the Epiphany with a penitential time. In Rome Advent preparation appeared in the sixth century. In 1095 the number of Advent Sundays was set at four. The word Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning coming.

In the ninth century, the Church designated the **first Sunday of Advent as the beginning of the Liturgical (Church) year**. Advent begins on the Sunday closest to the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, Nov. 30, and ends on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24. This year the first Sunday of Advent is Nov. 30. The Church is invited to focus on the coming of the **Divine Infant Jesus**.

- We remember the ancient 1,000s-year wait praying for the Messiah to come.
- We thank God for the Incarnation when the Son of God humbled Himself, took on our humanity, and lived on earth to free us from sin.
- We desire the second coming of Jesus at the end of time as He promised.

Advent Wreath: Many families have an Advent wreath, light it at dinner time, and pray together. The Advent wreath is a circle--no beginning or end. This sacramental calls to mind God's eternal plan of salvation and renews our hope to share eternal life in Heaven. The wreath is made of greenery because Christ came to give us new life through His passion, death, and resurrection. The lighted candles represent Christ, who entered this world to scatter the darkness of evil and show us the way of righteousness. Three candles are purple, symbolizing penance, preparation, and sacrifice. We rejoice at the rose candle on the third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) because Christmas preparation time is half finished. Lighting one more candle each week shows increasing readiness to meet Our Lord.

See **THE PEN** continued on Page Three

United Across the Diocese New MDCCW FUNDRAISER! Bella Goose Coffee Syrup!

Be on the lookout for a representative of your parish selling this year's fundraiser---Bella Goose coffee syrup!! We are pleased to partner with them to sell this well known product made in the Wisconsin Dells area. See more details on this unique fundraiser on pg 4.

Thank you!!

Sue Koch, Ways/Means Chair.

United in Voice with NCCW

NCCW's HISTORY 1970+

By Carol Rogers, President MDCCW

The National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) is the parent organization of MDCCW founded by the US Bishops on March 4, 1920. Purposes of **NCCW** were and still are consistent. See page 6 for NCCW's History from 1970 to the present.

Continue 'NCCW's HISTORY 1970+' on Page 6



LEADERSHIP

Inspiration for Local Councils by Sue Barker,
MDCCW Leadership Commission Chair

Our CCWs are not just groups of women getting together for socializing. We are groups of women working toward a common goal, serving the Catholic Church. In order to do this, we need strong leadership and willing workers. Our officers are our leaders but need help from all members to attain our goals. Members need to feel valued in order to help out. Have you told your group that you appreciate what they have done? Any big project needs several members working together to be successful. Do you have a leader for each committee? These women need to know they are doing a good job and should be acknowledged for it. Thank them and celebrate with the group. When women know they are appreciated they will do their best and often even volunteer for other projects. This feeling of appreciation is shared as valued members. Build trust between members, celebrate with them and you will have no problem being a successful CCW!

SPIRITUALITY

Faith Finds a Home at Home

"We don't have to rake the leaves today! Woohoo!" My son cheered when he awoke and saw the blanket of snow covering the yard. "It's just like when Mom throws a blanket over the laundry pile!" My daughter observed with glee. The bursts of laughter from my entire family revealed the truth of my daughter's statement. Sometimes we put things off. Sometimes we hide things, knowing at some point we will have to deal with them later. But in this penitential and anticipatory season of Advent, it's time to throw off the blanket and reveal to the light all things hidden within our hearts. Examination, time spent in prayer before Our Lord, Confession -- these are the tools we need to uncover all that Our Lord needs to see as we prepare our hearts to receive Him at Christmas. As we wait for Him, don't wait to uncover the things "unseen."

By Julianne Nornberg

Contributor to the Catholic Herald and member of Holy Cross Parish (formerly Pastorate 19)



LEADERSHIP

By Coreen S. Marlein of NCCW's LTD Team



Greetings fellow CCW members!

As we stand on the threshold of Advent, Fr. Thomas Washburn (*Spiritual Advisor to the NCCW*) indicated that now is the time to prepare our hearts for the arrival of Christ and not wait until December 23 to begin this journey. Advent is a time of holy readiness. He provided us with three simple questions:

1) What am I waiting for this Advent?

Our wait is not passive and should be hopeful, eager, anticipating. Each of us has our own wants during this time. Advent allows us to name those longings and write them down; ponder and pray for them. Advent is a time of waiting for Jesus. According to Psalm 25:3, "Those who wait for the Lord will not be disappointed."

2) How am I preparing my heart to receive Him?

John the Baptist says that we must "Prepare the way of the Lord". What in my life needs straightening out, such as our habits and attitudes? What are valleys of discouragement that need lifting? What mountains of pride or resentment need leveling. Carve 5 minutes each day to pray. Return to reconciliation. True peace has to begin somewhere. Preparing our hearts isn't about perfection! Slow down enough to listen to God's voice and make room in our hearts for God. Advent is the chance to open the door again.

3) Who am I becoming as I wait? The first Advent was lived in the heart and body of Mary. She was greatly troubled, but she said yes in faith and yes in trust. During Advent, it is our time to grow in patience, trust, and generosity. We too are called to bear Christ in

The first Advent was lived in the heart and body of Mary.

See [The Threshold of ADVENT](#)
continued on Page 5!

**Papal Prayer
Intentions**

for the Month of
December

**'For Christians
in areas of
conflict'**

"Let us pray that
Christians living in
areas of war or
conflict, especially in
the Middle East, might
be seeds of peace,
reconciliation, and
hope."

**VOICE of the
SAINTS**

Feasts, Memorials and
Solemnities

- ST. FRANCIS XAVIER,
12-3
- St. John Damascene, 12-4
- First Friday, 12-5
- St. Nicholas, 12-6
- SECOND SUNDAY OF
ADVENT 12-7
- The IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION 12-8
- St. Juan Diego, 12-9
- Our Lady of Loreto, 12-10
- St. Damasus, 12-11
- OUR LADY OF
GUADALUPE, 12-12
- ST. LUCY, 12-13
- THIRD SUNDAY OF
ADVENT, 12-14
- FOURTH SUNDAY OF
ADVENT, 12-21
- St. John of Kanty, 12-23
- THE NATIVITY OF THE
LORD, 12-25
- ST. STEPHEN, 12-26
- ST. JOHN, APOSTLE,
12-27
- THE HOLY FAMILY, 12-28

THE PEN CONTINUED from Page One

Council Is Catholic Women: The Council of Catholic Women (CCW) exists at all levels because of Catholic Women. Women in the parish or pastorate, the vicariate, the diocese, the province, and the national are the essence of Council. We pray; we offer devotion to Our Lord, Our Lady, the saints and angels every day. As a result of that prayer foundation, we joyfully provide service that supports CCW initiatives. We meet to plan, perform works, and donate funds, yet our focus is always on the spiritual growth and well-being of souls whom God has placed in our lives and in the world.

None of the work of Council could occur without us and the many other women that God is calling to remain or become active members of our CCWs. Let us always remember that God relies on us to be His hands and feet and voice on the earth. Our asking other women to ride with us to a Council meeting or event may be the impetus they need to find out more about CCW and the vital work that we perform. It is our responsibility to ensure the work of Council in the future by inviting and befriending more women to join us in this most excellent and fun adventure that is the **Council of Catholic Women**.

MDCCW Board Meeting: The Board met on Saturday, November 15, at St. Andrew Church in Verona. Board representatives provided information about local events at their parishes and the Barbara Unger gave a rundown of the Madison Catholic Woman's Club events for the next several months. Please read about all the upcoming events in this and future issues of The Pen.

Financial matters are always important because it costs a bit to operate as a diocesan CCW. Now, events in the past year have made money talk fun! See page five for the reasons that the MDCCW treasury is in good shape!

See **THE PEN** continued on Page Five



SERVICE:

Box of Joy DELIVERS!



MDCCW's Service Chair Linda Ripp confirms that nearly 1100 Boxes of Joy were sent to help children in Latin America celebrate

Christmas! Thank you everyone who assisted in making this project a work of mercy! **Plan for next year** - Line up your TEAM!

Contact Linda Ripp linmdccw@gmail.com

SERVICE:

Pick-A-THEME

THEME for a PASTORAL CALENDAR:

The Nativity of the Lord and the Holy Family are easily honored by adopting a family for Christmas gifts, food donations, baby items drive.

THEME for DECEMBER:

Share the greatest gift of all - Jesus in your written Christmas cards to family and friends. Include your parish staff and priests, the shut-ins, lonely and those in nursing homes!

THEME Based on 'BE-ATTITUDES:

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Do acts of charity to comfort those in need.

THEME Based on NCCW Projects:

Vocations Purse Club helps fund the expenses of novices entering religious life who must be free of debt in order to enter. See www.nccw.org for details on donations.

EVENTS IN THE DIOCESE

Advent by Candlelight, Saturday, December 6, 12:00pm - 3:30pm hosted by the Saint Maximilian Kolbe Parish CCW and held at Saint John the Baptist School Cafeteria, 114 East Third Street, Waunakee. Join us for an afternoon of prayer, fellowship, music and a light lunch. Kris Kranenburg (Director of Communications at the Diocese of Madison) will speak to us about "Lessons In Yes; What Mary Teaches Us About Advent". Join us for this free event by registering with Kathy Roelke @ roelke@tds.net or (608) 469-8698. Deadline to register is Wednesday, December 3rd.

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Marian Statue Free-Will Offer, Thursday, January 1st, 11am - 1pm at St. John the Baptist, Princeton. To celebrate this Feast Day, the CCW is displaying over 800 Marian Statues, a unique collection by the Eunice Soda family where you can make a free-will offer and take home your favorite. Ham sandwiches, hot dogs and beverages will be provided - bring a dish to pass. Snow date January 4th.

SAVE THE (Tentative) DATE: MDCCW Conference & Spiritual Day. Tuesday, June 2, 2026. Plan to attend now at the beautiful Green Lake Convention Center with lodging available on site. Ellen Martin is the Chair for this event, feel free to contact her with your ideas! ellenmarymartin@gmail.com.

MDCCW's NEW FUNDRAISING FOCUS

From now until June 2026, MDCCW will focus on building the body of Christ by donating to the new church (construction to begin soon) at St. Augustine

Dollar for Dollar MATCH CHALLENGE!

University Parish in Platteville, WI. This Newman parish prepares college students to become active members while there and wherever they go following graduation. Be enthusiastic in your planning to give to this cause. A dollar-for-dollar match up to \$10,000 has been promised in the name of the women of the Diocese. Fr. Eric Nielsen, as new pastor, is prepared to receive the benefits of your generosity.

NEW MDCCW FUNDRAISER!

We are happy to announce the new MDCCW fundraiser: Bella Goose flavored coffee syrup!! From the present time through the 2026 MDCCW convention, we will sell a two pack of either vanilla bean-chai or vanilla bean-caramel for \$15. Separate jars (chai, vanilla bean, caramel) can be purchased for \$8.00.

Bella Goose is a company based out of Wisconsin Dells who produces coffee and syrups. They share the same values as MDCCW such as being against human trafficking. They have set up shops in Thailand to help poor women, and those on the streets, to have a job to improve their lives. They have a coffee shop in Wisconsin Dells and one in Briggsville and they have been wonderful to work with. Other fundraising organizations have been FFA, sports groups and missionaries. They have helped to make the selling of the coffee syrup as easy as possible for us. The syrup is 100% natural and crafted without preservatives, corn syrup or dyes. It can be used in hot/iced coffee, hot/cold milk, hot chocolate, apple cider, caramel sauce on ice cream, caramel dip for apple slices, and so much more.

If you are interested in purchasing some of this product to support your Madison Diocesan Council of Catholic Women and their numerous expenses (dues, convention, office supplies, mileage, etc.) please contact Ways and Means Chairperson Sue Koch (kochspeech@gmail.com; 920-229-4150). Please remember that the MDCCW works on behalf of all women of the diocese "to support, empower, and educate all Catholic Women in spirituality, leadership and service".



Have an EVENT or ACTIVITY that you wish to see in The Pen?
Forward request 3 weeks before the first of the month you wish to see your listing to:
Carol Rogers carrogmdccw@gmail.com with subject line: 'Newsletter Event'.

Resources
announced at the
NCCW
CONVENTION!

The Spirituality Commission in keeping with Beth Mahoney's theme as NCCW President for the past two years, "Women on a Journey - Sharing Our Stories," published a book that includes life stories of 19 American women who are on the path to canonization.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Resolutions published a book that includes all the resolutions passed by NCCW since 2000. Resolutions might have addressed an issue that has since been resolved; others are timeless in nature. We need to revisit them and renew our commitment to them. With this book, now we can do that.

The Leadership Commission published an updated Strategic Plan for NCCW that can be used to guide diocesan and local CCWs.

A Handbook for Spiritual Advisors was published to inform the priests who guide our councils of what are their duties and responsibilities. As Spiritual Advisors change or retire, this booklet will provide information to the newly appointed priests.

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- Conf. & Spiritual Day, 06-28- 2025, St. Francis Xavier, Cross Plains \$2,665
- Uncle Phil's Mustard Fundraiser \$1,286

We have no sure total of how many dollars were sent directly to NCCW for Water for Life and The Madonna Plan and other NCCW funds. Please send a copy of the Donation Form to Patty Spragg whenever you send funds to NCCW. I would like to report to you just how generous and industrious are the women of MDCCW by giving your that total next year.

Still on money matters, as a result of the at the Conference, MDCCW donated the following:

- Offertory Collection to St. Bernard of Clairvaux Building Fund \$1,874
- Raffle, Women's Care Center, Madison \$ 324
- Raffle, Clarity Clinic, Platteville \$ 324
- Raffle, CareNet of Dane County \$ 323

Tentatively, but almost for sure, the MDCCW Conference and Spiritual Day 2026 will be held on Tuesday, June 2 at the Green Lake Convention Center with lodging available on site.

Two items on the agenda were assigned to Ad Hoc Committees to study and bring recommendations to the next Board meeting in March. MDCCW Board Representation has been complicated by the changes in the diocese over the past few years. The committee chaired by Coreen Marklein will suggest a new strategy. Contact her if you want input into the question at ccwcoreen@gmail.com

The 2nd committee was formed to study the MDCCW Dues Structure. The changes in parishes, pastorates, and vicariates has led to uncertainty at all levels about how to support MDCCW in its operations. Patty Spragg, MDCCW Treasurer, will chair the committee. Please contact her with your ideas and input at pattyspragg@gmail.com

Wishing all of you a holy Advent and Christmas Season,

Our Lady of Good Counsel, Pray for us.

In His Mercy and Her Love,

Carol Rogers

Madison Diocesan Council of Catholic Women President

The Threshold of ADVENT

CONTINUED from Page Three

our hearts every day. Amelia Sweeney and members of NCCW's Spirituality Commission provided additional ways to prepare ourselves and our councils for Advent. Ideas include: Almsgiving, such as the Angel Tree or Giving Tree; performing the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy; Advent retreat; special Advent calendar; holding Mini-Retreats from Grace Marie; and Pray the St. Andrew's Prayer (15 times/day) from his feast day November 30 to December 24.

As an individual NCCW member, you can take advantage of Member Only resources including access to the Monthly Calls and Manuals on Policies, job descriptions, Parliamentary procedure and much more. See page 6 sidebar for listing!

Blessings to everyone for a special Advent and Christmas Season.

by Coreen S. Marklein, NCCW's LTD Team Member

If your Council would like to host a Leadership Training Day, contact www.nccw.org

**NCCW Offers
Its Members:**

MDCCW encourages its members to join NCCW as Individual members to receive the following benefits and the rewards gained from networking with women within our own Madison Diocese.

- Spirituality, Leadership, and Service opportunities, programs and resources
- Annual subscription to the quarterly Catholic Woman magazine,
- Annual subscription to the monthly NCCW President's Pen e-newsletter,
- Eligibility to vote in NCCW Elections and at the Annual Business meeting,
- Annual Convention,
- Avenue to network with Catholic women all over the USA,
- Service on NCCW Commissions, Teams, and Committees,
- Access to resources of the Center of Concern's Education for Justice,
- Opportunities to enhance personal faith formation and address current social issues with prayer and programs.

NCCW's HISTORY 1970 +

by MDCCW President Carol Rogers

The National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) is the parent organization of MDCCW founded by the US Bishops on March 4, 1920. Purposes of NCCW were and still:

1. To give US Catholic women a common voice and an instrument for unified action in matters affecting Catholic or national welfare.
2. To ensure Catholic representation and the recognition of Catholic principles on national committees and movements affecting religious, moral, and material well-being.
3. To stimulate the work of existing Catholic women's organizations to greater service and usefulness in meeting the needs of our times.

The list of historical initiatives below are listed in present tense because, though they were begun in the past, many of them remain endemic to CCW work today.

1970 - 2000

- Work to end abortion and euthanasia.
- Create and implement the RESPITE program to provide support for caregivers.
- Address ending domestic violence through education and advocacy programs.
- Collaborate with Catholic Relief Services to establish the Refugee Women Emergency Fund.
- Create and fund Mary's Garden at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

2000 - Onward

- Create the Water for Life Fund and Madonna Plan to support ongoing efforts of Catholic Relief Services .
- Implement Vocation Purse Club to assist women seeking to enter religious life with their financial obstacles.
- Form a mentoring program, Women Embracing Women.
- Implement and support new communication strategies using online and digital media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, new databases, and updated web presence.
- Work to end Human Trafficking with affiliated organizations and US Catholic Sisters.
- Establish outreach program connecting Holy Land children and US students.
- Establish CCW levels for high school and college age women.
- Provide formal program of Faith formation for members.
- Develop series of mini-retreat resources.
- Establish Leadership, Training, and Development program.
- Track spiritual and corporal works of mercy performed by members during the Jubilee Year of Mercy. (Recorded 2+ million for Million Works of Mercy Program - a certificate noting results was presented to Pope Francis in April 2017).

JOY TO THE WORLD