

Message from Our President

Carol Rogers

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

Building the Body of Christ

Thanksgiving. We have so many things to be thankful for! Everyone’s list is individually different; yet all are the same. Everything comes from God. Every good thing is granted by His perfect Will. Even what we might at first see as a bad thing is granted by His permissive Will. We might not like all the circumstances of our lives, but in the end, we as Catholics know that God alone sees the entire picture. He will bring greater good to us as we stay faithful to Him. Jesus, I trust in You!

Advent is upon us with Christmas just a blink away. During these four weeks of Advent, watch for ways to practice self-discipline in preparation for the birth of our Savior. The little (and big) sacrifices that we make are good for our own souls as well as for the world. We participate in the salvation of souls as we offer our “prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass” as the Morning Offering says. When Christmas comes, let us be ever more ready to receive the Christ Child in our hearts by living a Holy Advent.

The world is still in the *Jubilee Year of Hope*. If you have not yet passed through a Holy Door, consider doing so. Reap the fruit of your pilgrimage by completing the requirements to earn a plenary indulgence for yourself or for a Holy Soul in Purgatory. In addition to the six pilgrimage sites in the Madison diocese, other sites are listed for Wisconsin:

- Immaculate Heart of Mary Church/Shrine of Our Lady of the Green Scapular, Monona
- The Schoenstatt Shrine, Madison
- St. Cecilia Church, Wisconsin Dells
- St. Bernard Church, Watertown
- Nativity of Mary Church, Janesville
- St. Mary Church, Fennimore
- National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion, Champion, near Green Bay
- Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, La Crosse
- Basilica and National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians at Holy Hill, Hubertus, north of Milwaukee

Building the House of God

Through this year, MDCCW is raising funds for St. Augustine University Parish in Platteville. The church and adjoining Newman Center are beyond repair. Its pastor, Fr. Eric Nielsen, was involved with the building of St. Paul’s Catholic Center on the UW Madison campus. A \$10,000 dollar-for-dollar match is in place, so any money that is given from the women of the diocese will be automatically doubled. If the Lord is calling you or your CCW or other group to make a significant donation, please contact Derek Furrer, fundraising chair, at 608-482-4432 or derek@pioneercatholic.org. Please consider donating part or all of funds raised by your CCW to the building project.

Fall Vicariate Meetings

I was so glad to attend two fall vicariate meetings at which I met many wonderful women and renewed friendships with others.

- Green Lake Vicariate (formerly Columbia North) hosted its meeting the afternoon of Oct. 23 at St. John the Baptist Church in Montello. With the theme of “Life’s Journey — God’s Will,” Fr. Bill Kearley, parochial vicar of All Saints, Berlin, spoke

on his journey from marriage to priesthood. Jess Keaney from Hope House, a women's shelter in Baraboo, spoke on ending Domestic Violence.

- Mississippi River Vicariate (formerly Grant) met at St. Mary Church in Platteville, Oct. 28, late afternoon. The theme was "Many Seasons of Hope." The speakers were Deacon Lee Eggers and his wife Patti, who provided information on the formation and the roles and responsibilities of a deacon.

I am praying for you all to grow in hope, peace, joy, and love as you travel through Advent and the Christmas season.

From Our Spiritual Advisor

Msgr. Duane Moellenberndt

Dear Members of the Madison Diocesan Council of Catholic Women,

It won't be long, and we will conclude another year. As you read this, we will be in the heart of the holiday season with several holy days and celebrations. With the first Sunday of Advent, we begin a new liturgical year in the Catholic Church. Shortly, we will turn our calendars, and it will be 2026.

Indeed, especially this time of year we hear the often-repeated phrase "where does time go." So, this seems to be a good time to look at what we have accomplished this past year and what our hopes for the new year are both in the Church and in the community in which we live.

This has been a year of great change in our diocese and in our nation. You and I know change is never easy. It can throw us off base and disorient our days. However,

thanks be to God, we know that One far greater than ourselves is in charge. We entrust our days and ourselves into God's loving embrace. We also seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to how we can live our lives even more in tune with the message of the Gospel.

To that end, may I suggest that we commit ourselves to doing three things in the year ahead.

- Do something extra in our parish to further the ministry done in the parish,
- Volunteer in our local community to make it a better place to live, and
- Offer our time and talent in one area in the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women to build up our organization.

We have 365 days to do three extra things using our God given talents for God's glory and the good of others. As Cardinal Newman prayed, "Let me put myself aside to think of the happiness of others."

From Our Province Director

Diane Oakland

I am delighted to serve as your Province Director! I live in West Allis with my husband, John. We have three sons, three lovely daughters-in-law, six dear grandchildren, and six grand-dogs! I enjoy being an active member of St. John the Evangelist Parish CCW in Greenfield.

My involvement with the Milwaukee Archdiocesan CCW began shortly after retirement, with an answer to a prayer at Mass one day, "Lord, what do I do now?" Arriving at home, a call came from the president asking if I'd be the Spirituality Commission chair. I didn't know what it

meant, but I knew I had to say, “Yes!” Sounds familiar, doesn’t it?

I am so grateful and congratulate you on all that you do, sharing your faith together and serving our Lord through your council activities, events and prayers for your community. NCCW offers many resources to help you in your parishes and communities. I listed a few below. Log on to NCCW.org and click “Members Only Resources.” If you need help logging-on, contact the office or me dianeOak@gmail.com.

- Guidance and Resource Manual for you, Spiritual Advisor Handbook for your Advisor
- Pray the Rosary with NCCW, a collection of Rosary meditations. Consider praying a decade of the Rosary at your meetings for the love of Our Lady
- Join Monthly Rosary Call to pray together, all info on the home page
- Connect to Council Chat with Jane Schiszik on the 2nd Monday of each month
- I urge you to invite someone new to each council meeting, to discover how wonderful your council is! She’ll want to join and perhaps one day become a leader to help all of us continue to carry on the legacy of the 105-year-old NCCW.
- I hope to see you this coming year at council events! Our Lady of Good Counsel, pray for us..

Leadership Commission

Sue Barker

Leadership Commission Chair

As this Jubilee Year comes to an end on January 6, it is a good time to reflect on what has been accomplished in the last twelve months. Did your CCW set goals for

this year and were they accomplished? Were committees set up with a leader for each project? Were new members added and warmly welcomed to each meeting? Hopefully, long standing members were also acknowledged and told how much they are appreciated. All groups, including CCWs, work better when everyone trusts each other and celebrate their successes.

In the new year one of our goals will be working towards the completion of the new cathedral, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in Madison. The bells have been installed, stained glass windows have been hung and a covered entrance is ready for use. As we anticipate the official dedication, let us pray for the blessing of our cathedral and how the CCW has been a part of it!

Service Commission

Linda Ripp

Service Commission Chair

your donations to our Box of Joy project. Your support of this project brings Christmas Joy to children in Central and South American countries. Donations came from all parts of the diocese.

Special thanks to the volunteers who helped pack the boxes at St Martin Church in Martinsville (Cross Plains) which was once again the drop-off site for Boxes of Joy. We donated 781 Boxes of Joy from our site. Another 200-plus boxes were taken to the Oshkosh site. Ladies from Waunakee, Verona, Baraboo, Fennimore, and Portage helped pack the cartons Oct 25, Nov 2, and Nov 4. Holy Cross students and parents from Cross Plains helped pack on Nov 1.

As Chair of this Project, I want to thank everyone again and look forward to doing it again next year!

Fundraiser Opportunity

The MDCCW mustard fundraiser We are happy to announce the new MDCCW fundraiser: Bella Goose flavored syrups!!

Until the 2026 MDCCW convention, we will sell a two pack of either vanilla bean and chai or vanilla bean and caramel for \$15. Separate jars (chai, vanilla bean, caramel) can be purchased for \$8.

Based in Wisconsin Dells, Bella Goose has been wonderful to work with and shares our concern about human trafficking. The company has set up shops in Thailand to employ poor women, including those on the streets. It has coffee shops in Wisconsin Dells and Briggsville, with their coffee roasting operation in Briggsville.

Several other nonprofit organizations, including FFA, sports groups and missionaries, work with Bella Goose to sell the syrups which are 100 percent natural. They contain no preservative, corn syrup or dyes. They 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 our Madison Diocesan Council of Catholic Women and our many expenses (dues, convention, office supplies, mileage), please contact me (kochspeech@gmail.com; 920-229-4150). Our price of \$15 is a deal since the two-packs are \$20 on the Bella Goose website.

MDCCW works on behalf of all women of the diocese "to support, empower, and educate all Catholic Women in spirituality, leadership and service."

Coreen Marklein Co-Presides at Leadership Training

National Council of Catholic Women LTD Team Members Coreen Marklein, Baraboo, and Jody Watermann from Aurora IL, conduct leadership training for women from throughout Wisconsin. The Milwaukee Province, with the cooperation of MDCCW and the other arch/diocesan councils sponsored a leadership training in July at St. Bronislava Church, Plover.

Nine women from the Madison Diocese joined women from the Milwaukee Archdiocese and dioceses of Superior, La Cross, and Green Bay.

Board Considers Representation

The *Into the Deep* diocesan initiative has gotten deeper. With the consolidation of parishes, we are faced with a different organization structure for the MDCCW.

For decades women on the MDCCW Board were elected as officers from 11 county deaneries. In 2023 a vicariate plan was introduced giving MDCCW nine areas of representation. In 2024 those boundaries became meaningless when parishes became part of 30 pastorates. MDCCW at that time invited representatives from the 30 pastorates to be board members so that women from all over the diocese would have a voice. Parish CCWs began to change as well; some became stronger, some disappeared. In July 2025, the diocese reduced the number of vicariates to seven.

The MDCCW Board at its November meeting considered how board members will be selected. Should representation be defined on the vicariate level or the parish level? How many representatives from an area should be appointed to the board? Contact Carol Rogers at 608-391-2564) or carrogMDCCW@gmail.com to add input to the discussion.

SAVE THE DATE!

**2026 MDCCW
Convention**

June 2, 2026

Green Lake Conference Center

2025 National Council of Catholic Women Convention

Believe in the Eucharist: Blessed, Broken and Shared

August 19-23, Orlando, FL

Madison Diocesan Women at National Convention

MDCCW President Carol Rogers led the Madison diocesan delegation to the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) Convention in Orlando, August 19-23.

The theme, "Believe in the Eucharist, Blessed, Broken, and Shared," fit well with NCCW President Beth Mahoney's theme of "We are women on a journey — sharing our stories with an emphasis on the Eucharist." Joining Carol from Madison were

- Coreen Marklein, Baraboo, NCCW LTD Team, Bylaws Committee member, Milwaukee Province Director-elect, MDCCW Legislative Committee Chair
- Sue Barker, Verona, MDCCW Leadership Commission Chair
- Linda Ripp, Martinsville, MDCCW Service Commission Chair, Immediate Past MDCCW President
- Kathy Loy, Fennimore, Mississippi River Vicariate CCW President

- Philomena Rieder-Endres, Waunakee, First-Time Attendee

The 2026 NCCW Convention is scheduled for August 26 to 29 in Grand Rapids, MI. The Convention theme is "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

Editor's note. As per tradition, the fall/winter newsletter includes in-person accounts of the convention written by convention attendees. Thanks to Carol, Coreen, Kathy, Linda, and Sue for sharing the following reports. Keep in mind you are reading summaries of homilies and presentations as recorded by the writers.

By Carol Rogers

The convention week included tours of historic and holy sites, wonderful Masses and homilies, informative meetings, thoughtful yet humorous presentations by NCCW officers and commissions and committees, a day of spiritual retreat (special this year), delicious meals, inspiring

and energizing talks from keynote speakers, time to hang out with friends, time to make new friends, and time to relax (no laundry, no dishes, no dusting, no vacuuming, etc.).

NCCW Convention is a delight. Yes, it is expensive but so worth the money and effort to attend. If you want to attend, please ask your CCW to support your trip with a grant or by setting aside funds from one or more fundraisers to offset your costs. You will be representing them at the convention and will bring back valuable information and resources for your CCW.

The 2026 convention will be in our neighboring state of Michigan. Let me know as soon as possible if you are interested in attending so that you will be included in plans for the trip to Grand Rapids August 26-29.

Holy Women on the Pathway

We came home with a booklet from the Spirituality Commission, "Holy Women on the Pathway to Canonization, American Female Servants of God." The booklet names and honors the women of America who have been proclaimed Saint or Blessed. These women gave their lives to God in ordinary ways that led to extraordinary holiness. They were women on a journey (just like we are) whose stories are inspiring.

You may have heard of Servant of God **Dorothy Day** (1897-1980). A Catholic convert, she co-founded with Peter Maurin the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933. She is known for her faithfulness to the Gospel, living the "preferential option for the poor," and showing that a lay person can achieve great things. Today, 187 Catholic Worker communities, including several in Wisconsin, remain committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken.

You may also have heard of Servant of **God Rhoda Greer Wise** (1888-1948). This woman suffered many family and physical challenges, saw visions of St. Therese of Lisieux, and had the stigmata on her hands and feet. However, we may never have known about her except for the fact that Rita Rizzo at age 19 went to her for healing of a chronic stomach condition. Rhoda asked her to pray a novena after which Rita was miraculously cured. Rita lived on to become Mother Angelica, foundress of the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN).

I am guessing that I could name all 17 of the other women whose lives are told in this book and few of you would recognize any of them; yet they are all up for canonization. Praying for the miracle that these women need to be performed by God through their intercession brings great graces to those who have been asking for movement of the hand of God on behalf of these Blessed women. Get a copy of the book from the NCCW Online Store and pray for their canonization.

NCCW Resolutions Book

Everyone who attended the convention came home with the 25th Anniversary Resolution Book, 2000-2024, which was created by an ad hoc committee. In the early years of NCCW, a convention was held in odd years, and a general assembly was held in even years. Resolutions were presented to the body for approval only in odd years.

The last general assembly was held in 2012. Since 2013, NCCW has held a convention every year. Resolutions are presented nearly every year. Resolutions are directives to all NCCW members to raise awareness, provide direction, and support worthy initiatives. As new resolutions are passed, the ones from previous years seem to slip out of memory.

This resolutions book provides a way for us to review resolutions from past years to continue ones that we are still practicing and to resurrect ones that are still pertinent but may have been forgotten.

For example, in 2022, just three years ago, NCCW passed a resolution to promote the Daily Rosary and First Saturday Devotions in every parish. Our Lady of Fatima asked for these over 100 years ago. Yet how many of us remember Fatima? How many of us even remember this resolution or have heard of it?

Even a few people gathered every First Saturday of the month for years can influence this occurring as a parish initiative over time. That is what happened in my own parish. After 17 years of my leading the devotions for a small group of people, three years ago, we finally got a priest to lead the devotions every First Saturday. Now more people attend, including whole families with their children.

A 2001 Resolution that is still important pertains to internet filtering. We need to recognize the danger of allowing children to access the internet unprotected from obscenity and pornography, from gambling and hate sites. Advocacy programs for law enforcement and legislative support for new laws to arrest the criminals are needed now as much as 24 years ago.

The book is available by contacting nccw.org or by calling 703-224-0990.

By Sue Barker

Pre-Convention Tour

One of the many benefits of arriving on Monday of NCCW Convention week is being able to enjoy the scheduled event on Tuesday. This always gives us an idea of what the host city has to offer, especially if you've never been there before. As this was

my first visit to Florida, I had no idea what to expect.

We traveled an hour from the convention hotel to Lake Wales, home of Bok Tower Gardens which includes El Retiro House, Olmsted Gardens, and the Singing Tower and Carillon.

The landscaping includes walking paths and many different types of trees and vegetation. We were fortunate that the main musician for the Carillon was in residence the day we visited so we enjoyed a recital in the beautiful outdoors. This instrument is comprised of 60 bells, rung by an inside clapper, using fists!

The El Retiro home includes many original furnishings along with replicas of others, with a carved wood style.

By Kathy Loy

Daily Liturgies

The main Celebrants at the Masses were the Rev. Thomas Washburn, NCCW Spiritual Advisor and pastor of Holy Trinity Parish, West Harwich, MA; Most Rev. William A. Wack, NCCW Episcopal Liaison and Bishop of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee FL; and Most Rev. John Noonan, Bishop of the Diocese of Orlando FL.

As he welcomed the women in the opening liturgy held in the large convention hall, Fr. Washburn said, "You remind all of us that Catholic women are the leaven of the Church—a quiet but powerful force that lifts up families, strengthens parishes, and carries Christ into the world,"

Focusing on the convention theme, "Believe in the Eucharist – Blessed, Broken, and Shared," he shared words from St. Francis of Assisi. "Jesus hides Himself under the little form of bread! Look at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him!

Hold back nothing of yourself for yourself, so that He who gives Himself completely to you, may receive you completely.”

Blessed. Mary is the first Tabernacle and is Blessed.

Broken. We ourselves can be broken in this life. Mary was also broken at times.

Shared. Don't keep Jesus locked in the church or your heart. We are to share Jesus with others.

Believe in the Eucharist. Don't keep Jesus hidden when we leave church. Jesus is meant to be shared, and we carry Him with us by receiving the Eucharist. We can share Jesus just by offering a smile to someone who feels broken and rejected in their life. We can be that connection to share the word of God by our actions. Christ is Real. Our life is a gift from God and is meant to be shared.

“Who better to do this but Women of Faith?”

Fr. Washburn also presided at the next day's liturgy held at the Mary Queen of the Universe Basilica and National Shrine. The Mass celebrated the Feast of the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Good Counsel.

It is precisely when we are empty that Mary sees the need for Jesus and intervenes when others often overlook us. It was at the wedding at Cana that Mary said: Do Whatever He tells You. Mary does not claim the spotlight but directs others to Jesus.

God takes what is ordinary and makes it extraordinary. In our lives here today, Jesus comes to us and wants to break the brokenness in our lives and make us whole. We can do this just by bringing our ordinary, simple things to Jesus. God uses our own limitations and comes to us in our emptiness and brokenness to multiply into something greater. Like the plain water that

He transforms into wine, He wants to transform the brokenness in our lives into something greater.

We must trust just as Mary trusted Jesus to do the right thing. It is when we suffer that He enters our heart. Jesus wants to be the source of our joy.

Mary, Our Lady of Good Counsel, whispers to us to trust. Trust that we will have joy, mercy, hope, and faith.

Most Rev. William Wack CSC presided at the Mass the next day on the Feast of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

How can we be people of hope? Unease has settled into all of us. We were not made for fear. Trust is needed. Dread is not of God, and fear is not of God. We need to have hope and cultivate hope. Be hopeful and share our hope with others. Rediscover God's word. Read and re-read the gospels.

Listen to Our Lord speak to us. Your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. If only we ask for it. You can be the hope for others. We have hope, and it is in knowing that makes all the difference in the world.

Christian hope is an expectation we have through faith. We all hope that one day we will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Be kind, Be Humble, Be grateful, be loving and all these things will come back to you. Faith is all about believing.

Mary answered God's call. God has done great things for me. Mary humbled herself. We are called to say yes in the small things, and God will do mighty things through us. Tell Jesus you trust in him.

Most Rev. John Noonan presided at the closing liturgy which ended with the installation of officers.

God is the most important thing in your life. Be a person of faith. Have you had an encounter with God? How do we encounter

God? The power of God renews each one of us. It is difficult in today's world when we encounter injury all over the world. With God we can do great things. Scripture reminds us of the Spirit of God.

By Coreen Marklein

Opening the Doors of Hope to "Spirituality, Leadership, Service"

The Leadership, Development and Training (LTD) team presented on the Jubilee of Hope. Mary Rowley, our team leader, introduced the session.

On December 24, 2024, Pope Francis opened the holy door of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome beginning the Jubilee Year of Hope. This Jubilee Holy Year is the 2025th anniversary of the Incarnation of our Lord, an event of great spiritual, ecclesial, and social significance in the life of the Church. The concept of Jubilee has its origins in the Book of Leviticus (chapter 25) as a special year of reconciliation, pilgrimage, and coming home. Pope Francis not only designated this year as a Jubilee Year of Hope, but as a time to renew ourselves as Pilgrims of Hope.

The call of our ministry in CCW is to bring Christ to those we meet through our day-to-day encounters, conversations, and actions. We are leaders in our homes, our churches, and in our communities. By the grace of God, we can carry out the instructions that He gives us.

During our presentation, my team members and I opened the doors to Spirituality, Leadership, and Service. We explained that it is important to carry out these actions with love and not out of entitlement. It is important to have the right amount of each ministry in our councils. It is easy to overlook one when working on another, but we need to keep in mind that it takes all three to do the work.

Spirituality. Words that express spirituality are unity, faith, worship, and meditation. Spirituality should be incorporated in all council meetings as we are Christian women who share a common bond of building our spiritual faith.

1. Take time for silent reflection and spiritual conversations and set a purpose for each meeting.
2. Begin and end each meeting with prayer. Encourage participation in the NCCW monthly Rosary call, held on the 13th of each month at 6:30 p.m.
3. Invite your priest, deacon, or religious sister to bring a spiritual message to your meetings.
4. Pray for others during each meeting. Have a prayer basket at each meeting so that members can put in their prayer intentions.
5. Hold special events throughout the year such as Advent or Lenten retreats, host a Living Rosary, celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel (April 26), set up a Trunk or Treat for children encouraging the children to dress up as their favorite saint. Other examples are Catholic trivia night, speakers who have gone on a pilgrimage.

Leadership. Pope Leo tells us to make a difference and listen to God's whispers.

1. Believe. We are sisters in Christ, working together to listen with an open heart to God's whispers. CCW leaders should not be afraid to stand for the truth, protect the vulnerable, and proclaim the Gospel, even when difficult
2. Trust. Christ personally invited his disciples to follow him. Personally invite women in your parish to join your meetings and activities. True leaders serve others humbly, not seeking power

for their own sake but working for the good of those they lead.

3. Surrender. It is about and for God, not yourself. Use your words face to face. Use kindness and gratitude. Be nice to all, even those with whom you may not agree. It's ok to have a different opinion. Share your knowledge and accept knowledge from others. Use positive communication. Leave the negativity outside. Effective CCW leadership always involves prayer, listening to God's will and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
4. Receive. What do we receive from being a Council of Catholic Woman member? Start each function with prayer/celebration. Receive God's blessings by having a few minutes of quiet time during your meetings. Leadership fosters unity in the Body of Christ and encourages other to grow in faith and promote peace. How many times have we "listened" but really did not listen, as we're thinking of what we're going to say next? Listen to the hope that God is sending us.

Service. Many hands make light work. The Service Commission engages NCCW members to address the needs and concerns of our individual communities and support and enhance family life within the Church and Society.

1. All are called to serve. Each time you volunteer, you serve. Smile. Each time we do something as part of His servant people, we serve. Do it with love and grace.
2. As we come in all shapes and sizes, service also comes in all shapes and sizes. We are asked to put ourselves out in the forefront to represent our councils.

3. Be prepared to give ideas and guidance to help women and councils be successful. If we go to a meeting ill-prepared, we are not doing our job. Service is only limited by our imagination.
4. Share our gifts and talents from God. If we do not use our gifts or ignore them, we will never know what could have been and we may lose them, or they may be taken away.

The slide presentations, handouts, and table discussions after each presentation gave many examples of how we can use our time, talent, and treasure. All that we do in Spirituality, Leadership, and Service comes from the heart. Do not be afraid. God is there to guide you along the way. The rewards are incredible and immeasurable!

The LTD team presentation concluded with Mary Rowley leading us in prayer. As St. Teresa of Avila said, "Christ has no body but yours".

Spiritual Day of Encounter

New to this year's NCCW Convention was a Spiritual Day of Encounter with the theme of "Eucharistic Encounter with Mary/Mother of Hope."

It was held offsite at the Mary Queen of the Universe Basilica and National Shrine built by tourists with the mission to serve the travelers in search of the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation. The grounds include a Rosary Garden, an outdoor chapel, a bell tower, and a pond spanned by a bridge which is home to turtles, fish, birds, and surrounded by willows and other greenery.

The spiritual day began with Fr. Michael MacInnis, coordinator of Human Formation and director of the Propaedeutic Program at Saint John's Seminary in Brighton, MA. He

invited us to discover what it means to live with hope and faith and walk with Mary, especially in times when hope feels difficult or distant.

Mary was not only a young woman of Nazareth who said yes to the angel Gabriel, but she was the first to carry Jesus in her body, the first to adore Him with her eyes and heart, and the first to live her life completely united in God's presence. If the Eucharist is truly the Real Presence of Christ's Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, then Mary is the model of how to receive, adore, and live in union with Him.

Fr. MacInnis encouraged us to take a moment to get comfortable, close our eyes, breathe, feel the silence around us and feel the gentle presence of the Holy Spirit. "Let yourself live not just physically but spiritually, emotionally, and wholeheartedly."

We have an intimate relationship with God because we are made in His image and likeness. We are made for heaven; we are born out of love, and we return this love to God. God seeks us. His love is unconditional. We should spend our time preparing for salvation that God has in store for us.

The Church calls Mary, the Mother of Hope. She is the Mother of Jesus. She believed that the words spoken to her would be fulfilled. She did not have all the answers, but she believed and trusted God. He became her strength through joy and sorrow, light and darkness. Every time we approach the altar to receive the Eucharist, we imitate Mary's choice by saying Yes and trust in God.

The Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. It is the most profound way that we encounter Christ on this side of eternity. It is the Real Presence of Jesus as His Flesh and Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity under the appearance of

bread and wine. We are invited into a mystical reality every time we participate in the sacrifice of the Mass.

The Eucharist is not the end of the journey but is the beginning. As women of faith, we lead by example. We bring God to others through our lives in our families, workplaces, ministries, our communities, and in the small intimate moments of our lives.

Fr. MacInnis shared a story from his family life and how it strengthened his spiritual life. His parents divorced when he was in high school, but after many years apart, they remarried. He is convinced it was the Holy Eucharist and prayer that brought his parents together.

Fr. MacInnis told us to ask ourselves. 1) Where in your life is God inviting you to say yes (prayer, adoration, the Eucharist, etc.)? 2) Where is He calling you to carry His Presence?

We all have our own altar of sacrifice and should give our cross and sacrifice to God. We need to be like Mary. We should not be afraid even if we do not understand everything but have faith and trust. We need to persevere like Mary did at the foot of the cross; she remained steadfast when all hope appeared lost. Mary's presence teaches us what it means to persevere in faith, love, and trust in everything.

We are asked to pray to Mary, Mother of Hope, to intercede for us. Whatever our cross, let Mary be our example every day and give our sacrifice to God. As the Mother of Christ, she is our sure guide to Christ. Her guidance will teach us to believe in God's promises when our hearts are weary, help us receive her Son through the Eucharist with the same love and trust she had in God, and intercede for us so that we need not fear or doubt.

After lunch, our speaker was Sr. Pam Smith, SS.C.O.M., Ph.D., director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Diocese of Charleston, SC. She blended humor and personal stories to inspire us.

- Always approach individuals in a respectful manner as they are children of God.
- Tune into the side of Christ that lives in each of us.
- Thank God for the gift of life and realize that He will strengthen our faith, help us to live and trust in Him.
- Reflect on our missed opportunities as they can be our own fault or the result of when we said no instead of yes. Sometimes we discover our opportunity is supposed to occur at a different time.
- Remember that Mary said yes to Angel Gabriel. Her response changed her life as well as Joseph's.
- Every good thing comes from the Blessed Sacrament. While we have not given birth to Christ as Mary did, each time we receive Holy Communion we bring Christ into the world.
- Make Jesus real to people through us.
- Be attentive to the opportunities to bear Christ to the world and remind ourselves that we are all children of a Loving Father.

By Linda Ripp

Mary's Garden

This past spring, Mary's Garden outside the Basilica in Washington, D.C., was rededicated after it had been vandalized.

At the NCCW convention, we made a garden in the hallway. Different groups added different elements. Province directors, NCCW officers, spiritual advisors, first-timers, and others all placed different items in the garden. NCCW leaders put bees in the garden. Spiritual advisors added

watering cans. First-timers contributed butterflies. Others put in sunshine and rain drops and flowers of various colors. When it was completed, all of us had made a beautiful garden.

The Way of Love

Marie Miller, the keynote speaker on Saturday, also sang and shared stories at the awards banquet. One of nine siblings who grew up in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia, she has been a singer/songwriter for the past 16 years.

In 2017, she performed for Pope Francis at the Festival of Families, singing about her prayer for "a future husband of six foot two and eyes of blue, but I'm not picky." Four years later, she got more than she prayed for. She married a man who is six foot four!

In her keynote presentation, she talked about St. Therese of Lisieux. She shared several songs from her 2024 Christian album "the Way of Love," which focuses on how Therese of Lisieux's life has influenced her own life. St. Therese's autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, inspired the album which speaks to "the humble heart of love. Love will be the way back home."

Marie said even St Therese had doubts of faith. God sent his own Mother who stood at the foot of the Cross to be with us in our darkness and depression. She sang, "I will be with you, help you figure things out, you're not alone, listen to me."

Marie said the "Way of Love" is a way of surrender to Divine Mercy, total trust. St Ignatius had the perfect prayer of surrender.

St. Therese wanted to preach the Gospel in five continents. She didn't get to do that, but she influenced St Mother Theresa to do that.

Mercy isn't about how good you are, but how good God is. St Therese wanted to

quench the thirst of God. Marie compared her to the woman at the well. God thirsts for all of us. She sang: Woman, don't you know you're loved? Woman, don't you know your worth? This is who you are!

Last year, Maroe started solely writing music for Jesus. "I choose this road, and I'm never turning back". She closed with the song, "King of Love." Marie Miller: Official Website — Music, Videos & Shows | Marie Miller Music

Past Province Director Is NCCW President-Elect

Congratulations to Jane Schiszik, our own past province director. Elected in the spring, Jane was installed as president-elect at the NCCW convention. One of her primary jobs is to oversee the planning for the 2026 NCCW Convention, scheduled for Aug. 26-29 in Grand Rapids, MI.

As the past Milwaukee Province director, Jane wrote a column for this newsletter and participated in several MDCCW events.

She grew up on a farm in Central Wisconsin as the oldest of seven siblings. A retired nurse, she and her husband of 49 years have three adult children and five grandchildren.

In the current issue of Catholic Woman, the magazine of the NCCW, Jane writes, "To know me is to understand my passion for the National Council of Catholic Women. I find great joy in sharing my knowledge and experiences in helping women learn of and understand the gift of Council."

She said her involvement with Council is "about experiencing joy. It is the joy of sharing God's love with others through prayer and action. A joy that energizes me."

NCCW President Focuses on Servant Leadership

NCCW President Amy Kennedy chose "Servant Leadership: We Are Women of Faith and Action" as her theme for her two-year term. Having served and held CCW leadership positions at all levels for over 25 years, Amy took over the NCCW presidency following this summer's NCCW convention.

Professionally, she is a partner at a Salt Lake City law firm, focusing her work on family law and estate planning. She met her husband in 2004 at the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City, and they were married the next year. In her spare time, Amy enjoys cooking, reading, and traveling. She looks forward to being a leader for all Catholic women as "we embody and live the NCCW's mission of spirituality, leadership, and service to each other and the Church."

Save the Date for 2026 NCCW Convention

August 26 to 29, Grand Rapids, MI