

I arrived in Stratford on Saturday evening enjoying a ride from the members living in North Bay.

Sunday morning the Ontario Provincial Council team (OPC team) met at 9 am for the pre-convention meeting. Some of the items on the agenda were: 1) Making use of the National funds for workshops and conventions. They have changed their policy as well. 2) Spiritual Advisor –Bishop Fred Colli's update. 3) Financial Statements review. 4)Administration Assistant report of correspondence. 5) presentation of resolutions. 6) Instructed vote for the National Convention elections. 7) reports 8) insurance for diocese. 9) review of website & Facebook 10) 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at next year's convention. 11) Social Justice and Bishop Pappin awards. 12) National P&P updates 13) Diocesan convention reports 14) Convention update.

There were four resolutions that were deemed ready to present at this convention. They are: Enhance the Canada Health Act to Include Home Care; Equal Access for Permanent Residence, an Amendment to the Immigration Act; Expand the Nutrition North Canada Program to Include all Communities Accessible Only by Air; and Training for the Safe Operation of All-Terrain Vehicles by Youth under the Age of 16.

Organization Chair, Anne Madden explained that National is going to implement a new reporting procedure. She is organizing a training for the diocesan Organization Chairs to attend on September 16 and 17 in Toronto. Reports will be simplified and done on line.

The opening Mass was at 7pm at Immaculate Conception church. A reception followed in the church hall.

Monday morning began with Mass in the ballroom and the crowning of Mary. During the business meeting later that morning, the Anglican Women's League representatives spoke of the similarities between us. Their theme is "The Love of Jesus calls us". The United Church Women's representative spoke also about how

women have been leaders for many years. The Women's Interchurch Council spoke. They are responsible for the implementation of World Day of Prayer.

Bishop William McGrattan, Peterborough Diocese was the Key Note Speaker that morning. His theme was Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. He spoke a lot about Pope Frances and told his story of meeting the Pope. He was checking into the building he was to stay in at Vatican City. Pope Frances also lives there. Pope Frances came into the lobby and greeted Bishop McGrattan and then spoke with the people working behind the reception desk. The Pope was much more concerned with how they were than he was with the Bishop. He is always looking out for the poor, the working class, the lowly. Bishop McGrattan had many quotes from Pope Frances. He went through the Spiritual Works of Mercy and elaborated on them. To Counsel the doubtful he suggested we let our CWL sisters know that they are doing a good job. To Bear Wrongs Patiently he suggested that we recognize humility and turn the wrong over to Jesus and he will help us grow. To Forgive Offences willingly he suggested we seek forgiveness and forgive others then let it go and hold no grudge. We must ask for God's grace to do this. To Comfort the Afflicted he explained that everyone has a burden and we can help them ease it by supporting and praying for them. He also spoke of the Beatitudes and that the statement Blessed are the Meek means that we are not weak but strong in that our power is under control and we don't use it to gain from others. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit refers to us being wealthy in Faith and the Pure of Heart acts free of self gain.

On Monday afternoon the four resolutions were presented. There were a few amendments and grammar corrections but all four passed with three being sent on to the National Council for consideration.

That evening the diocesan dinners took place. There were seven of us from the Timmins Diocese; Annette Kelly, Marie Black, Shirley Gravel , Bernice Duncan, Norma, Kathy Ruddy and myself. We enjoyed the Festival City Big Band in the Ballroom later that evening. We even got to do a little dancing!

Tuesday morning began with Mass in the ball room and followed with a pilgrimage through a Symbolic Holy Door. We walked out of the doors on one

side of the ball room singing the Mercy song and walked outside singing to the other side of the ball room where we entered through the symbolic Holy door.

We continued with the Business Session until lunch and then participated in a poverty lunch. We received a bowl of soup and a bun. The soup was good but I managed to find another bun so that I wouldn't be hungry before break time!

The afternoon was spent celebrating the Year of Mercy with Action, Prayer and Reconciliation. There were many priests available to hear confessions during this time. A group of members went to The Local, a community Food Centre and learned about their programs. Another group of members sorted the food brought by members into boxes to go to the St. Vincent De Paul Society. The rest of us spent the time in prayer.

Our afternoon presenter was Anne Shore and the title of her talk was "CWL women of Mercy everyday". She gave us a challenge to Live more deeply in Mercy. We need to look into ourselves and keep alive areas of God's tenderness in our lives. She spoke of the year of Mercy logo and said it depicts us, the lamb, being found by Christ and carried on his shoulder back to the Father and then forgiven with His mercy. Mercy is where God meets us. It is a bridge that connects God and Humans according to Pope Frances. We are loved as we are now. We are being transformed through acts of love through which we look after others by means of the works of Mercy. Even funeral sandwiches are arms of love in that they show support and love. This year of Mercy challenges us to go beyond to where we are uncomfortable. How can I be a more merciful person? What and who am I afraid of?

The banquet was that evening. I was privileged to sit next to Rev Trev. Fr. Trevor pastor of two parishes in North Bay in the Sault Ste. Marie diocese.

Barb Dowding, our National President gave her report Wednesday morning. The Social Justice Award went to Alice Gasley of Kingston. The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020 will be in Montreal and works are in progress already. It was reported that \$773.40 was made from the poverty lunch which I think went towards the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The Mass collection was for Holy Family Retreat House in

Stratford. A total of \$1432.70 was donated. Almost 400 members attended the convention.

Our speaker Wednesday morning was Michelle O'Rorke and she spoke on Palliative and Hospice Care. She was very informative and funny! She said that God calls us to let others know they are loved. We need to befriend our own life before we can help others befriend their death. We are Care Partners not caregivers. Working together, there is a mutual transformation during the relationship. People feel awkward with people dying but she reminded us that people will forget what you say or do but they will never forget how you made them feel. Words are not important, presence is. Don't be afraid of the encounter. Hospice Palliative Care addresses the physical, practical, physio, social and spiritual aspects. Hospice Palliative Care should happen along with medical care and not just in the last couple of weeks of life. It is helping people to live the final journey. We must think and reflect and be prepared for death while we are still healthy. We need to help people have the conversations about medical interventions like breathing tubes etc. She asked "How can we help Long term Care facilities help people to die well?" We need to decrease suffering and improve quality of live. Fear is driving the assisted suicide movement as well as anxiety, anger and fearing that we will be a burden. If you are visiting a dying friend who does not believe in God then talk to them as you would a Christian friend but replace the word God with Love. Love never dies, your family will continue to love you, you will love them. When it is time to say Goodbye to a loved one who is dying, say "I forgive you, please forgive me. Thank you, I love you." The sense of hearing is the last thing to go in a dying person so you can talk to them when they are unconscious and even after they have just died. Hospice care is intended for the last couple weeks of life. It gives families a break from the caring of the patient to allow them to become family again instead of care partners. Our living and dying can be a gift to others. It is important that we plan how we want to die so she advises we check out the Advance Care Planning website.

The Thunderbay Diocese invited us to the 70<sup>th</sup> Provincial Convention next July in Thunderbay with a cute skit involving our President Pauline Krupa paddling a cardboard canoe.

We went by bus to the closing mass at St. Joseph's church and then enjoyed the closing luncheon of lasagna and salad.

The OPC team had a post- convention meeting after lunch. Some business needs were attended too. We were encouraged to have a special wrap up activity to celebrate the Year of Mercy. The OPC team fall meeting is in Toronto on September 30, October 1<sup>st</sup> at the Weston Hotel. The Friday workshop may be Protocol at Diocesan conventions as we are not all doing it the same way. We will also be reviewing the Policy and Procedure Manual.

Kathy and I spent the evening walking along the river taking pictures of the swans and ducks. We enjoyed viewing the gardens at the Festival Theatre and then saw Chorus Line that night. We had a good drive home on Thursday .