

January 2011

Dear Sisters in Christ,

The month of January every year is marked by the members of the Catholic Women's League (CWL) as "membership month." Its goal is to bring to the attention of Catholic women the nature and mission of the CWL in order to provide them with the information on which they might consider joining this organization. I am pleased to endorse this effort and encourage our Catholic women aged 15 and up to consider this invitation seriously.

My conviction concerning the great importance of the CWL to the life of the Church stems from my personal experience with the League. For five years I had the great honour and blessing of serving as its National Spiritual Advisor. In this capacity I met about four times each year with the national executive council. In addition, over that same time span, I participated annually in the national convention and at least once in each of the provincial conventions. This gave me direct personal experience of how the members of the League live faithfully their mission: "The Catholic Women's League of Canada is an organization rooted in Gospel values calling its members to holiness through service to the people of God."

For many, the CWL is encountered as a parish-based group of women who dedicate themselves in a myriad of ways to support the life of the local parish. It is this, of course, and it is a great deal more! It operates at the diocesan, provincial and national levels, where members ponder deeply the issues facing the people of our day. They want to be of real and lasting service by reaching out to those in need in accordance with the principles of the Gospel and the doctrine of the Church. Each year their discernment leads to the formulation of resolutions, which are then brought to the attention of the appropriate levels of government and translated into action plans. I readily admit that I only became aware of many serious social issues of the day through the grassroots research and discernment of the members of the CWL. Governments listen to them and so many people are given the gift of hope by their outreach.

The positive impact of the Catholic Women's League is not limited to our own country. They are a member of the *World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations* (WUCWO), which is recognized by the Holy See. This brings the members of the CWL into contact and dialogue with women all over the world. They learn of the suffering of many, and take immediate steps to express their solidarity and give assistance.

The Catholic Women's League is a great gift to our Church, to our country, and, indeed, to our world. In this membership month I am pleased to extend an invitation to the women of our Archdiocese to receive information about the League and to give serious and prayerful consideration to joining this wonderful Catholic organization. For more information or to download a membership form, please visit www.cwl.ab.ca.

✠ Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton