

THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

Issue 27

cwlstmichlon@gmail.com

June 2025

Message from our President Dorothy Solomon



Fr. Felix, it is with mixed emotions that, we the members of St. Michael's CWL, bid you farewell. Thank you for shepherding this little flock and for being a beacon of utter joy, sparking hope for each of us to live and follow the Good Shepherd. Your

teaching, leadership, service and ready gift of your time and presence are what we will always treasure.

As you move on to new pastures to further develop your priestly calling and serve wherever the Good Shepherd leads you, please know that you will remain in our prayers. Until our paths cross again, may God's richest blessings be with you.

Did you know that as a Catholic Women's League member you also belong to over 100 Catholic women's organizations in 66 countries? You start with our St. Michael's Parish CWL Council. The next level is the London Region, comprised of 19 area parish councils where the presidents meet bi-monthly to gather and transmit information to their members. The London Diocese is divided into seven regions and the chairpersons for each region meet bi-monthly with the Diocesan Executive. Furthermore, you also belong to the Ontario Provincial CWL. There are 17 Roman Catholic Dioceses in Ontario. Presidents of the ten provincial councils and one Military Ordinate meet with the National CWL. And we are not done yet - The National Council has representation in the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations. The WUCWO meets annually with the Pope. Catholic values are always being discussed and evaluated with information being relayed back to each of us.

The strength of the League is that though it is a national organization, each parish council is unique and is especially able to address the

needs of its own members and community. This is exemplified in the many ways you each live out the core values of faith, service and social justice. The individual members' involvements are just too numerous to list because many participate in the wider community that we may not hear about in our CWL minutes. Our wrap up potluck and awards ceremony (see page 11) gave us an opportunity to celebrate, socialize, thank and share our upcoming plans.

May the summer break offer you opportunities to rest, recharge, explore a new hobby and enjoy social interactions. When you return in September, we look forward to having you share your new and existing skills, bringing the fresh ideas gained from taking time for personal growth. Share your dreams of what we can become together. Have a safe and blessed summer.

Prayer Intentions

We have offered specific prayer intentions for each month, and we are asking not only each of our members but also all the members of St. Michael's community, to bring these intentions to the Lord. Let us continue to lift one another up in prayer.

June: Let us pray for our priests, seminarians and those who are called to Religious life.

July: Let us pray for those who are contemplating suicide, and their loved ones.

"Here I am Lord, Send Me"

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook

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St Michael's London C.W.L



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From Our Spiritual Advisor Fr. Felix Odobi

Not Departing, But Sent



In Ecclesiastes 3:1, the preacher says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens..." As my time as your Spiritual Advisor comes to an

end by the end of June, I must say that it has been an honour to have journeyed with you over the past two years.

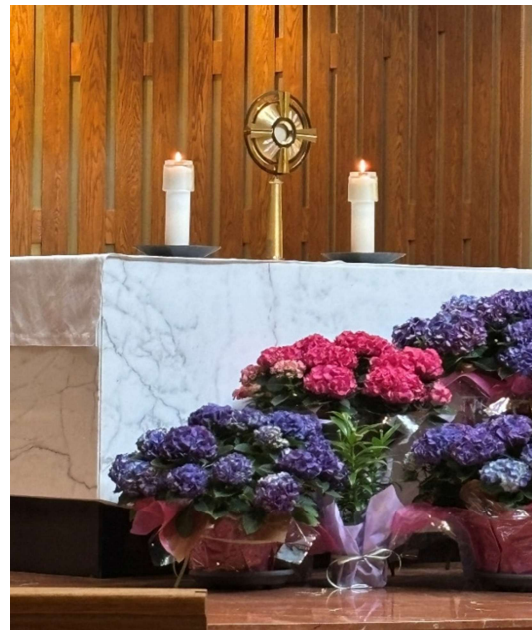
Journeying closely with you has exposed me to the core mission of the Catholic Women's League (CWL), as reflected in its three pillars—faith, service, and social justice. I have had the privilege to be at CWL's various social events: the social outing, Potluck, Spring Friendship Luncheon, and Dinner Dance. These social events not only bring joy to participants but also foster a strong sense of community and belonging. I have also attended spiritual programs organized by CWL, such as the World Day of Prayer for Peace, Lenten Workshop, Reaffirmation Ceremony, a 12-hour adoration dedicated to those in Palliative care, and the Service of Pins. These programs bring spiritual upliftment to those who attend them.

Writing a reflection for the newsletter has been a fulfilling experience. The focus of my reflections has been to remind ourselves of the place of God's Word in our lives. Amid all the chaos and confusion in our world today, God's Word remains our source of comfort, meaning and peace. We grow in faith as our knowledge of God's Word increases. In Romans 10:17, Paul says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ." Our faith is anchored on God's promises for us through Jesus Christ. "Faith is doing what God tells us to do, then expecting God to do what He tells us He will do (c.f. Osborn, Healing the Sick, P. 56).

Over the past two years, I have shared my stories with you, and you have shared yours with me. At times, some of these stories revealed our vulnerabilities and brought tears to our eyes. At other times, the stories brought us moments of joy and laughter. Consequently, I do not consider myself departing from you but rather as someone sent, carrying with me the memories, lessons, passion, and desire for spiritual growth that I have found among you.

I would like to sincerely thank you for your love, care, support and understanding over the past two years. I remain eternally grateful. I want you to know that you are always in my thoughts and prayers. Please also pray for me.

This is my parting prayer for you: "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20).



**Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative
Care**

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June 2025

Featured Member Hiruni Fonseka

Darlene Charrette



I am excited to introduce to you Hiruni Fonseka! It was a pleasure getting to know Hiruni a little better while writing this article. She exudes cheerfulness and grace, and her energy is a great addition to our council.

Hiruni grew up in Sri Lanka with her parents and older sister. She was raised Catholic and participated in her church choir, Bible studies, Sunday School and other faith-based activities. Her faith continues to be important to Hiruni.

As a young adult, Hiruni followed her adventurous spirit by moving to India to study for her Bachelor of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology. Even though she didn't know anyone, she then moved to Malaysia where she worked as a speech language therapist for over three years.

At age 27, Hiruni fell in love and married. She and her husband had a few very happy years living in Toronto, but life took a turn. Hiruni became the caregiver for her husband who had contracted COVID. Combined with some underlying health issues, he passed away in 2021.

Hiruni took a break from work and with the help of others who guided her through this difficult time, she started praying again and refocused on her career. Hiruni took some post-grad certifications and moved herself once again, this time to London Ontario. She works at a hearing clinic here and in the fall will begin working on her Masters of Clinical Audiology at Western.

Hiruni joined St. Michael's Parish in 2022 and attends Mass regularly. She prays daily and describes her prayer life as a "conversation with God." She sees her life as a "living blessing of God."

Later in 2023, Hiruni decided to join the CWL. She wanted something more than her job and an empty house. She felt comfortable right away with this group of women and is happy to be involved in helping the community. Hiruni is our new Membership Chair and is looking forward to using her skills and getting to know more people in our group. From what I have learned about Hiruni, she will be excellent in this role!

In addition to her involvement with the CWL, Hiruni volunteers at the London Public Library as a tech tutor. A couple of times each year, she sends a donation to Sri Lanka to help provide food and school supplies to support a family in need there. Children and their education are very important to Hiruni. "This is how we beat poverty." She is also interested in helping mothers and expectant mothers. One day she hopes that she will have a family of her own.

Hiruni is truly an inspiration. She has exhibited a strong resilience to the challenges that life has given her. She is quick to smile, and her bubbly personality puts people at ease. She puts her trust in God. "God's plan for my life has been amazing. Everything I have prayed for God has given me, so I don't complain about the hardships." This summer, Hiruni will be returning to Sri Lanka to visit her family before beginning her studies in the fall. I am looking forward to getting to know Hiruni better in her new role as Membership Chair.

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Issue 27

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June 2025

Popes Past and Present

Connie Cote

Pope Francis passed away on April 26, 2025, at the age of 88, leaving behind a profound spiritual legacy characterized by humility, compassion, and a commitment to social justice. His teachings and actions consistently emphasized the dignity of every individual and the importance of caring for the marginalized. Approximately 250,000 mourners gathered in St. Peter's Square for the funeral Mass, including 50 heads of state and 10 reigning monarchs. An additional 150,000 people lined the streets of Rome to witness the procession as his coffin was transported to Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica for burial, reflecting his global influence and the deep affection many held for him.

The papacy of our newly elected Pope Leo XIV began with a focus on unity, mercy, and social justice. In his inaugural Mass on May 18, 2025, attended by our Catholic Prime Minister and many other dignitaries from around the world, Pope Leo emphasized the importance of love and unity in the Church, condemning the exploitation of Earth's resources and the marginalization of the poor. His papal motto, "In the one Christ, we are one," reflects his commitment to fostering communion within the Church and the world.

We are so blessed to be a part of a universal church whose traditions and precepts are over 2,000 years old and whose members number over 1.4 billion people. As members of the CWL we are proud to support the legacy of Pope Francis and the papacy of Pope Leo as we live out the mission of our Catholic Women's League- Growing in faith and witnessing to the love of God through ministry and service and our core values of faith, service and social justice.

May Pope Francis rest in the peace he so often spoke of and sought to extend to others. And

may God bless Pope Leo XIV with wisdom, strength, and compassion as he shepherds us in faith, hope and charity.

Photo credits

Gail Brown



It's all about the pictures! When this newsletter started four years ago as a way to keep us connected when we couldn't meet in person, it was a little four-page email document with very few illustrations and no photos. Look at it now! Ten pages every other month full of stories about our activities, and more importantly, full of great colour photos adding life to the articles. The newsletter wouldn't be half as successful without those pictures, all of which are generously provided by our members.

Some photos arrive almost magically by email or text without ever being requested. Others come from members who post them on Facebook and then graciously allow them to be used in the newsletter. There are usually several photos of the same event, and it gets tricky to keep track of which ones have ended up being used, so individual credits never make it onto the page.

But now it's time to give credit where photo credit is due and recognize at least a few of our wonderful contributors. It would be impossible to go back and mention everyone who has ever provided a photo, but in this issue alone we have photos from Joan Lobsinger, Anita Renders, Margaret Riehl, Verónica Solis, Michele Specht and Megan Young. To everyone who's ever contributed - thank you. Your photos bring these pages to life, so please keep them coming!

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Issue 27

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June 2025

London Diocesan Convention 2025

Here I am Lord, Send Me

The 105th Annual Diocesan Meeting of Members, or CWL Convention, was held in Stratford on April 28th to April 30th, and was attended by several of our members. Here is what two of them had to say about the experience.



The best part of the convention is always the camaraderie and warm friendship among all the women. You simply feel at home.

The structure of the convention is planned to be modified for next year. It will take place over two days: one day for education, and the other for business. During the educational part of the convention, we all have a voice! If we have a special need or interest, they are always open to listening and addressing those needs. You can visit the CWL Diocesan page and leave your comments.

On the second day of this year's convention, for the first talk, Linda Staudt shared her experience participating in the Synod in Rome and explained how the Church is working to foster conversation and greater participation of all Catholics in the life of the Church and in spreading the Gospel. She made it sound like a very efficient process of discernment to empower evangelization. However, we still need to

see how this will work in our local churches.

For the second talk, Kathy Furlong spoke about the continued efforts to promote truth and reconciliation. I was shocked to learn that the apology offered by Pope Francis was never accepted. This means we must continue making efforts to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation. In real life, I find this process difficult to understand—if the other party does not wish to reconcile, no matter how great the effort made by those seeking reconciliation, it may not be enough.

During the Mass, Bishop Fabbro expressed his appreciation for all the support the CWL offers for the Church's projects. He acknowledged that the feminine genius is indispensable in the life of the Church and expressed his deepest gratitude for all the CWL does to support the Church and various charities.

At the Closing Banquet we enjoyed delicious food, great short speeches, and fun conversations at the tables with many new acquaintances.

In summary, it was a day of prayer, fun, learning, and friendship! – **Verónica Solis**

I had the pleasure of attending part of the London Diocesan convention hosted by the Huron Perth region. It began with a beautiful opening Mass at St. Patrick's Kinkora. What a beautiful church. It was referred to as the basilica of the north. Following mass, we enjoyed dinner in the parish hall and then returned to the Arden Park Hotel for Fun Night, "Prom Throughout the Years." It certainly was a fun evening.

On Tuesday we heard three speakers. First, Francis Taylor spoke on Mental Health in Seniors. She said that just like other illnesses, you follow your doctors' orders and take the appropriate medication. She also showed us the YouTube video "Start Seeing Seniors". The next speaker, Linda Staudt, spoke on The Synod and Conversation of the Spirit. She shared her amazing experience and pictures with Pope Francis. The final speakers for the day were Kathy Furlong and Gwen Waeijen who spoke on Truth & Reconciliation. All were very interesting. – **Joan Lobsinger**

THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

Issue 27

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June 2025

FFi Annual Women's Seminar: "Magnificently Created"

Melissa Catunto and Agnes Lansink



The Family Foundations Institute (FFi) is dedicated to strengthening families in faith and relationships. Each year, they host a Women's Seminar. This year's theme was "Magnificently Created," with guest speaker Ann Burns, founder of the Feminine Project and contributor to Crisis Magazine and Catholic Women in Business.

The seminar centered on femininity as a precious gift from God—meant to be cherished, embraced, and lived out with purpose. Burns emphasized that God calls women to serve the Church, encourage one another, and act as mentors. Femininity is at the heart of society, with the power to sustain life and bring healing.

Ann reflected on how, after giving birth to her daughter, people complimented her on the child's sweetness but warned of the "difficult teen years." This, she said, highlights a cultural problem: we don't know how to raise girls into confident, faithful women. Society often treats femininity as weakness, yet in Genesis, God created both masculinity and femininity and called them good. When we embrace our God-given limits, we discover our strengths. Masculinity and femininity are not in competition; they are complementary gifts.

Burns critiqued the waves of feminism: the first disrupted family structure, the second created division between men and women. The solution, she said, is turning back to God. Mary, the Blessed Mother, is the perfect example of feminine receptivity—saying "Yes" to God's will and modeling trust, courage, and service.

St. John Paul II outlined four key attributes of femininity:

- Receptivity: Welcoming God's will and embracing our role
- Generosity: Receiving fully and giving back abundantly
- Sensitivity: Recognizing and responding to others' needs
- Maternity: Whether physical or spiritual, nurturing and protecting life

These qualities reflect God's tenderness, meant to bring healing to the world. Mary at the wedding at Cana embodies all four: she receives, acts, and stands firm in love.

The seminar's final message was about "Building a Village." Femininity must be active—not about hustling or doing more, but about creating community, fostering friendships, and drawing people closer to God. In a world obsessed with technology and productivity, we risk losing sight of our true purpose: to know, love, and serve God. We must prioritize relationships over busyness and offer even the mundane parts of life to God.

God loves us as we are. We don't need to prove ourselves. The world is starving for real connection. Ask: Where am I needed? Host a potluck, a book club, a porch chat. Be present. Love deeply.

As St. Benedict said, "Listen and attend with the ear of your heart."

THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

Issue 27

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June 2025

RESPECT FOR LIFE SPRING ACTIVITIES

Verónica Solis



National March for Life: Ottawa May 8th

It was truly a day full of adventures. Our journey began at midnight with the departure of the bus from St. Justin's Church. Along the way, we experienced a bit of unexpected excitement - a flat tire! This meant a long wait for a replacement bus. Eventually, a new ride arrived: a party limo! While it added a fun twist to our trip, with its parallel seating and party-style setup (not exactly ideal for the highway), it left a few of us a bit dizzy.

We arrived in Ottawa just in time for the 10:00 AM Mass, slightly disoriented but very grateful. The Mass was beautiful, filled with young people, and the priest expressed deep appreciation for everyone who had made the effort to attend the National March for Life.

After Mass, we had some time to grab a bite to eat before walking to the capital center, where the March began around 12:45 PM. The walk itself was the most rewarding experience - filled with joyful singing, heartfelt prayers, and the laughter of young people cheering for LIFE. There were thousands and thousands of youths, and the atmosphere was one of hope and unity.

I truly believe this is an experience every Catholic should live at least once in their lifetime. It is something precious—something that fills you with hope for the future and stays with you forever.

I also had the pleasure of meeting a couple of women from other CWL councils, who were sponsored by their parishes. What a great idea for us to consider for next year! Their council covered the cost for two parishioners to attend.

After the March, there were many inspiring short talks in support of life - from conception to natural death - accompanied by more singing and laughter. On the way back, after a peaceful dinner stop in Kingston, our bus was switched once again.

I honestly thought this might be my last time on this journey (after all, none of us are getting any younger), but hearing people joyfully say, "See you next year!" - both young and old - filled me with new hope. Everyone was so happy and truly blessed to have been part of this experience.

Mass for the Unborn: London, May 14th

On May 14, several of our CWL members attended a Mass for the Unborn, celebrated at St. Peter's Cathedral by Bishop R. Peter Fabbro. During his homily, Bishop Fabbro emphasized the importance of our commitment to defending and publicly witnessing to the sanctity of life - from conception to natural death.

He expressed his deep appreciation for the strong support shown by members of the Catholic Women's League and the Knights of Columbus, calling them beacons of hope in a society increasingly influenced by a culture of death.

Continued on Page 8

THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

Issue 27

cwlstmichlon@gmail.com

June 2025

Continued from Page 7

Bishop Fabbro noted, "Canada is the only country in the Western world without any laws protecting the life of a baby up until the day before birth. A mother can decide, for any reason, to have an abortion the day before delivery without any legal restriction."

He also offered special thanks for all the activities that promote and uphold the dignity of life, saying: "God knows all your efforts - 40 Days for Life, Chain for Life, March for Life. For God, no effort goes unrewarded. Keep doing this. You are mocked, insulted, out in the cold and rain, but for God, nothing goes unnoticed. Lives are being saved!"

We thank Bishop Fabbro for his continued presence and unwavering support of all the initiatives in our community that honor and protect the sacredness of life at every stage.

4LifeLondon GALA: London, May 15th

The GALA is a fundraising effort by the 4LifeLondon Association to educate people on issues regarding the Sacredness of Life. This time, the guest speaker Jonathon Van Marren focused his attention on the rapidly declining appreciation for life at the end of the road. He mentioned the strongest criticisms Canada is receiving - even from institutions that are not particularly Pro-Life, like the United Nations. They believe that Canada is following a path that puts all its citizens in grave danger. He ended by encouraging everyone to participate according to their means and stage of life, at any level, to learn more and to actively cherish and protect life from conception to natural death.

Our council filled nearly three tables - hopefully next year we can bring even more people to learn about and support LIFE from conception to natural death!

Walk for Life: London, June 7th

This Walk departed from and returned to St. Mary's School. At the start of the Walk, Fr. O'Connor and Fr. Momney encouraged everyone to walk with joy and confidence, reminding us that this was a public proclamation of the value of every human life. This is not something we invented, but something we recognize as what God has taught us all along.

Referring to Acts 28, where Paul is under house arrest in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar, they shared: "St. Paul, brought there by the Jews who wanted him dead, called them together to proclaim Jesus to them.



The Jews may have thought: Are you nuts, Paul? But Paul is in love with Jesus. Paul cannot hold back - he can't stop talking about Jesus. During this walk, many will think the same of us: Are you nuts? And we can say, yes - we are in love with God and care for the TRUTH. So, we entrust the fruitfulness of this walk into the hands and grace of God."

Over 200 people - many young families, young adults, and some elderly - made it through this 5K walk, filled with prayers, songs, and cheers for the preciousness and sanctity of life. Many CWL sisters enjoyed the fellowship together. Many others came out to support the

CWL walkers! Thank you to all CWL members for their participation!!

THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

Issue 27

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June 2025

2025 Spring Friendship Luncheon Gail Brown



Now in its third year, the Spring Friendship Tea has evolved into the Spring Friendship Luncheon. The event was first conceived as a way to combat loneliness in the community, and again this year invitations were sent to area seniors'

residences and to our own parishioners. On May 16th, 90 guests were welcomed to the parish hall for an afternoon of treats, tea, conversation and music.



Darlene Charrette and Cathie Gauthier welcomed everyone warmly with a few words before heading back to their hosting duties, while Father Felix greeted us all with his usual good cheer and led us in grace before the meal. The sandwiches and sweets were delicious, the conversations were lively, and the teacups were refilled many times.

The afternoon didn't end when the plates and cups were cleared away. The SMUGlees ukulele group followed up with their traditional musical entertainment while guests clapped and sang along.



It's safe to say the Friendship Luncheon was a great success. Father Felix summed it up beautifully: "I truly enjoyed the energy in the room that afternoon. I believe the Luncheon is a way we can bring joy to people's lives. Kudos to CWL for organizing it!"

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Issue 27

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June 2025

St. Michael's Yard Sale – May 27

The Yard Sale is run by the Knights of Columbus, with the CWL assisting in the kitchen and with clothing. It's always fun to work shoulder to shoulder with such wonderful gentlemen and amazing CWL volunteers.

This year, I tried something different with the food, and someone mentioned: "The CWL is a safe place for women - we can express ourselves and be who we are without fear of failure or criticism."

For me, that truly captured the spirit of the Yard Sale as I took charge of the kitchen. I want to thank all the amazing CWL volunteers who helped that day and from whom I learned so much, as always! - Verónica Solís

CWL Spring Baked Goods and Perennials Sale – Thank you!

Thank you to the many members who supported our May 31st/June 1st perennials and bake sale through your donations of plants, baked goods, time and/or purchases. The \$1,100.00 raised will help the groups and organizations that have come to count on the Catholic Women's League for their needs as well as our CWL initiatives

Thank you for supporting this successful event.



CWL Christmas Market 2025

Saturday, November 8

9:00 – 3:00 St. Michael's Parish Hall

This is the time of year for making delicious jams, sauces and other preserves. If you have mason jars, new lids, fruit or sugar to donate, we can find someone to make the preserves. If you would like some free canning jars, we have lots. Contact Darlene at 519-852-5252.

As we take a break over the summer, consider how you might contribute to making the Christmas Market a success. In addition to crafts, preserves, baking, jewellery and other donations we will require a lot of volunteers to set up, sell and clean up.

Or consider taking part in one of the crafting socials being held over the summer:

Sewn items - Wed., July 2, 1:00-4:00

Card making - Sat., August 9, 9:00-12:00

Decorations and craft kits - Wed., Sept. 10, 1:00-4:00 pm.

More details will be sent by email.



THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

Issue 27

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June Potluck Dinner and Service Pin Awards

On Wednesday, June 4th, the St. Michael's CWL held its final meeting before the summer break. A wonderful time was had by all at our Potluck Dinner Meeting where the tables were overflowing with an abundance of delicious foods and conversations were being enjoyed at every seat.

Our Spiritual Advisor, Father Felix, blessed the membership service pins, and then new members were welcomed with Insignia pins, while members with 5, 10 ... 55 years of CWL membership were recognized with their years of service pins. Those serving for 45 years or more were: Janet Peckham, Ann McCarvell, Florence Brady, Jean Miles, Marilyn Morgan, and Dorothy Solomon. In all, 39 people were acknowledged during the ceremony.

Father Felix will sadly be leaving us to study for his PhD. On behalf of our CWL, Dorothy Solomon thanked him for his support and gave him a gift of \$100.00. Father Felix asked us to keep him in our prayers.

The potluck evening always ends with special surprise entertainment and this year was no exception. The "All Our Sisters Choir" was started in August 2024 and is made up entirely of women with lived experience of homelessness in London. They shared their love of music and healing with us and received a standing ovation at the end of their performance.

Many thanks to all who helped in making this such a successful event! We look forward to reconnecting in the fall.



2025 Service Pins Awards

Insignia – Nancy Atube, Teresa Ansby-Weaver, Pam Boersen, Melissa Catunto, Barb Ceglarski, Marene Cope, Lina DeMarco, Angela Ezugwa, Maureen Nelson, Ada Obute, Deana Ruston

5 Years – Sue Cassidy, Judy Devlin, Tiena Fraser, Lucia Lehman, Catherine Neelamkavil, Rose Odili

10 Years – Teresa Johnston

15 Years – Cora Garber, Margaret Hutton, Joan Roffey

20 Years – Leanna McGee, Katherine Viner, Louise Watt, Sharon White

25 Years – Dee Baker-Wojcik

30 Years – Cherylann Grace, Margaret Kellow, Ellen Quigg, Marni Skilton

35 Years – Mary Kay, Evelyn O'Brien, Karen Owens

45 Years – Janet Peckham

50 Years – Ann McCarvell

55 Years – Florence Brady, Jean Miles, Marilyn Morgan, Dorothy Solomon



THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

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June 2025



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

London Diocesan Council Celebrates

A Day at Our Lady of the Rosary Shrine

St. Patrick's Church, Merlin, ON

5773 Tenth Line Merlin, ON N0P 1W0

July 23, 2025

All Are Welcome!



9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet

10:00 a.m. Prayerful Reflection

11:00 a.m. Mass

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:15 p.m. Rosary

Coffee, Tea and Water will be available.

Bring your lunch and a lawn chair.

Dress for the weather, as we meet rain or shine!

Free-will offerings to the Shrine and to the Rosarian priests, greatly appreciated.