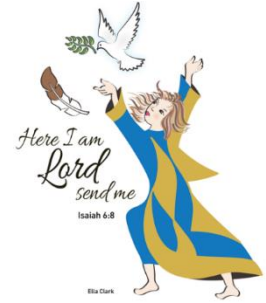




# St. Justin Martyr Catholic Women's League Highlights of 2023



## WELCOME!

Hello sisters of the League, On behalf of the 2023-2024 executive members, we would like to greet everyone a Happy New Year. We look forward to another fruitful and engaging year for our members and involvement in our parish and the community we serve.

I cannot believe that we are at the end of January. Before we start to get busy with the nitty gritty of what 2024 will bring, let us take a pause and take a walk down the memory lane of 2023.

The Catholic Women's League (CWL) is a national organization, which calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service. What is SJM CWL like? Our members are diverse. We come from many backgrounds and cultures, yet these did not deter us from coming together. Instead, the differences brought us closer in faith and sisterhood; integrate our God given talent in the service for the community. Each one of us finds fulfilment by becoming members. Below is our 2023 journey.

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, the 2023-2024 executive officers Belinda Cua Sia – President, Virginia Liscio – Vice President, Carolyn Tom – Treasurer, Cathy McElroy – Secretary and Rita Hui (deceased) – Spiritual Chair, were installed by Past President Diane Olmstead at a Mass celebrated by Msgr. Vid Vlasic, who is also our Council Spiritual Adviser. The event was well attended with more than 30 CWL members present. Diane and Virginia provided baked goods for refreshments afterward.



We held our annual Valentine's Day Raffle with a record number of prizes, and it was a remarkable success.



The CWL also collaborated with the Knights of Columbus to host the annual parish Pancake Sunday Breakfast fundraising event.



Everyone had a fun time. Also, in the busy month of February, we had a Recruitment Drive. Belinda and Virginia spoke at all the weekend masses, inviting women of the parish to join us. We were able to sign up several new members.

Our guest speaker for the February meeting was Lesley Sims of 360 Kids. This organization supports at risk youth in the York Region offering a variety of essential services. The discussion hit home and brought awareness that homelessness is very present even in our own community. That evening, we presented a \$200 donation to the organization.



Some members of the CWL had lunch with the seminarians at the St. Augustine Seminary and attended the Ordinandi Dinner held on March 9<sup>th</sup>. We continue to support and pray for these young men on their journey toward their priesthood.

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, CWL members attended the Dynamic Women of Faith Conference, sponsored by the Catholic Mom's group, and listened to many wonderful guest speakers. We also had a sendoff for one of our longtime members and volunteer, Anna Tersigni, who moved to Ottawa to be near her family. We will surely miss her. Our Council also hosted the North York Region Spring General Meeting which was attended by almost 100 CWL members from various councils.



Various parish ministries including CWL members celebrated Monsignor Vid's 73rd birthday.

Prior to Easter, the CWL had a successful fundraising event for the ShareLife Campaign. We were able to raise \$1,330 through the sale of plant arrangements and chocolates.



A cheque for ShareLife was presented to Monsignor Vid at the April Council meeting.

The month of April was jam packed. At Easter Vigil, eight of our CWL members accompanied and witnessed their catechumen on their initiation rites. On April 11, ten CWL members carpoiled to the Blessed Trinity Parish to attend the Mass to Welcome Archbishop Leo. On April 15, several CWL members attended the memorial service for Marianne Kelly (deceased), a member from 2014 until her passing in 2020. Janet and Ricky presented a plaque in memory of Marianne to her daughter Meghan. At the end of April, some of our members volunteered to serve as ushers at the 102nd Annual TDC Convention held at the Ajax Convention Center.



In May, the CWL participated in the Crowning of Mary hosted by the Legion of Mary. We also held a fun 10 pin bowling social and many CWL sisters participated. Also, that month, prior to our meeting, Belinda arranged for a Zumba instructor to come in and lead us in rhythmic dances.



In June, our Council helped with celebrating the St. Justin Martyr Day serving the parishioners with fresh baked goods. Council also supported the Youth Ministry group during the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The youth had a special sleepover Eucharistic Adoration night. Our Council prepared breakfast for the youth the next morning after mass. They enjoyed a hearty meal of bagels, eggs, and sausages very much. The youth were very thankful and appreciative of the hot breakfast. It is always a delight to support our Youth Ministry.



Before going on summer break, we celebrated dinner at The Mandarin. Everyone enjoyed the fellowship which included prayers, singing and dancing.

We invited a prospective member to join us so she could meet the Council. She felt so welcome that she joined on the spot that night! The evening was also very meaningful because members generously donated \$960 worth of gift cards which were presented to Lesley Sims, Director of Resource Development at 360 Kids on June 28<sup>th</sup>.



In the same month, our sister Anita, lead for the lay apostolate, was presented the Senior Volunteer Award by MPP Billy Pang.

Belinda attended the St. Augustine High School graduation held at the Hilton Toronto/Markham Suites to present the \$250 cheque for the St. Justin Martyr Catholics Women’s League Character Award given to a student who most exemplifies “strength of character”. This year’s recipient was none other than our very own altar server, Ms. Liora Desouza.



In July, one of our members, Therese Taber, invited CWL to her beautiful garden for an afternoon of fellowship, laughter, games, and refreshments.



Also in July, we provided baked goods and refreshments to the youth leaders who were running a 2-week summer camp for children at the church. Belinda also presented a \$400 cheque donation to Hilton Chiu, SJM Youth Minister.



During the summer months, we lost two of our lovely sisters, Rita Hui (deceased), and Imelda Graham (deceased). Rita served as our spiritual chair and embraced the CWL and all activities upon joining in 2020. Imelda joined CWL in 2023, although she is a newbie, her husband, Norris, indicated that Imelda just loved the CWL. It was a sad day for us as we bid them farewell. The only comfort that kept us together was the thought that they had gone home to our Father ahead of us.



We were truly fortunate to have Brenda Homuk accepted God's invitation to become our new Spiritual Chair. Welcome to the executive!

In September, as part of a national initiative to actively seek feedback from Councils, the League introduced the "Unity Outreach Project." The plan is that every council in Canada will receive a visit from a member of the diocesan level in hopes of exploring the needs and challenges of each council. Our Council was visited by Ciscily Winkler, Chair of Christian Family Life at the Toronto Diocesan Council. We discussed our Council's successes, challenges, mission, short- and long-term goals and recruitment. The Council was also made aware of the food insecurity issue in Toronto.



In October, some members of our Council participated in Life Chain Sunday at the corner of McCowan and Hwy 7. Five members attended the Magnificat Breakfast at the Julius event Centre for shared meal and fellowship. Some members listened to an inspiring presentation from TDC about Harry and Jennifer McAvoy, authors of the book "Faith, Love and Loss: Sustaining Hope amid Memory Loss and the Storms of Life." Five members attended the TDC Gala Dinner Dance to raise funds for the 2025 National Convention which will be held in Toronto. Everyone had a fun time.



November was a busy month for our Council. Belinda, together with other ministry representatives attended the 44<sup>th</sup> annual Cardinal's Dinner which has raised over 6 million for the Archbishop's personal charities that help the

less fortunate in the community. CWL also participated in the parish Christmas Craft Sale, a huge and exciting event for our parish community. CWL hosted the annual tearoom where guests enjoyed a cup of fresh coffee or tea, and sandwiches and butter tarts made by our members. There was also a separate table selling scarves, hats, mittens, and other accessories. While all these events are happening downstairs in the hall, members were also busy at the church foyer taking orders for the Poinsettias and Chocolates, the profits of which are donated to charities we support.

At the November general meeting, Catherine Von Zuben, a CWL member for 35 years and a past North York Region Chair, gave a presentation on the Synod for Synodality. Pope Francis called for a worldwide Synod entitled, For A Synodal Church:

Communion, Participation and Mission. The Synod on Synodality was a two-year process of praying, listening, dialoguing, and discerning which culminated in the celebration of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of



Bishops in October 2023. Every Diocese in the world participated.

In December, five CWL members, who are part of the St. Justin Martyr Parish Choir, sang lovely carols at the annual Christmas concert.



In closing the year, our Christmas dinner took place on December 12<sup>th</sup> at the Ithaca Greek Mediterranean Restaurant. We had a wonderful turn out including our 2 parish priests. Everyone enjoyed the food and fellowship and of course, the prizes.



Overall, 2023 was a busy and successful year for the St. Justin Martyr CWL Council. Thank you all for your support and contribution. Looking forward to another momentous year.