



President's Report to the AGM, 2020.

Once again, I am deeply indebted to the members of the Archdiocesan Council, for their generous and unfailing support throughout the year, for their energy, enthusiasm and dedication to every aspect of the Catholic Women's League at Council level, within their Branches and their Parishes. I feel very proud and humble to work with each and every one – Diane, Susan, Kath, Karen, Sam, Christina and Kath.

This year we mark a significant milestone for CWL in Wellington. In July 1944 Archbishop O'Shea called a meeting of the Catholic women of Wellington in Brougham Street, nearly 76 years ago. The first AGM was held on 29th July 1945, nearly 75 years ago. The first Conference was held 24th-25th May 1952, 68 years ago. *At some stage the Conferences were numbered, possibly from the first meeting, making this the 76th Conference & AGM.* Today, no matter any numerical confusion, we will commemorate the 75 years since the first AGM was held in 1945, and pray in thanks for all the thousands of women who have been committed League members in the Archdiocese. CWL offered the women of that time, end of WW2, and 20 years pre-Vatican 2, an opportunity to join together in Faith and Service in their Parishes, for the Church in New Zealand, for themselves and for each other - women would have welcomed this opportunity to be active in the life of the Church, at that time a men only participation, and to deepen their own faith.

Our **AGM and Conference** held in March 2019 was a Wellington project, organised by Otari and Onslow branches. Every time the League gathers in the Archdiocese, we experience the specialness of the organising branch, heartily appreciated by all present. May we continue to be ourselves, while at the same time being united in our commitment to Faith and Service with Action, through the theme for the year, to our Mission communities in the Pacific, and those here in New Zealand. My congratulations to you all.

Day of Reflection in Featherston for the Archdiocesan Council members, to reflect together on our Faith and Service, both personal and to CWL and to the Church of NZ, led by Joy Cowley – a very valuable day together. We would like to repeat this as a Retreat open to all members probably in June this year.

Regional Meetings in Heretaunga for all Branches, to hear Robyn Twemlow sharing the experience and problems facing families with members afflicted with Tourette's. When we heard that Heretaunga already had Robyn flying here from Christchurch, we all decided to make it one trip and all branches were represented, sharing expenses and transport to and from the Airport. Once again all being together was re-enforcing to all CWL members and a lovely time together in spite of very wet weather.

St Margaret Clitherow Feast Day in August was arranged and hosted by Onslow Branch. As Onslow does not have a Parish Priest, but a Sacramental priest serving the St Francis of Assisi parish of Newlands, Johnsonville and Onslow each weekend, we had a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion. Thanks Onslow for the excellent hospitality, with a relaxed afternoon preparing Bookmark memorials for deceased CWL members for Conference.

CWLA Conference in Bunbury Western Australia. Three members of the Archdiocesan Council attended the Australian CWLA Conference, having a wonderful time listening to

inspiring speakers, all from my home State WA. The quality of every Speaker was superb and the messages they challenged us all with will remain with us for a long time. It was the first time I had experienced an Aboriginal welcome – and very moving it was! It was interesting to notice that the issues of concern are common to both CWLs - housing, poverty, beginning of life and end of life care etc. Liturgies and Masses were very special occasions for us all - not to mention the dinner on the last evening.

After a busy year for the Archdiocesan Council, I hope that **Advent and Christmas** offered the opportunities for all of us to focus on this season of hope, peace and goodwill. The Hutt Region celebrated a beautiful Mass together, a wonderful way to prepare us all for Christmas. Otari arranged a lively evening of song led by their Tongan Choir followed by an amazing supper. Onslow had to cancel their Advent Liturgy because of a Parish funeral which coincided with the date chosen. All Branches concluded a very successful year.

In January the first Board Meeting for 2020 was held in Wellington, a chance to welcome and get to know Board Members better as well as our concern for the Branches, the Rejuvenating Kit Colleen McMurchy prepared ready for launching at the National Conference in Rotorua as a suggestion for many ways to reinvigorate our branches and CWL in general. Susan Dickson, our new National President has continued to work with Dawn Mullins on Social Issues at NCW conference, as well as investigating a new Website presentation, trials of uses of Facebook as a part of 21st C communication and appeal to the younger generations. Our Spiritual Director Sr Patricia Stephenson sj, has wonderful ideas for our prayer and reflection. Today we will have the opportunity to hear our National President Susan Dickson share her vision for CWLANZ. Jenny Muschamp, National Mission Convenor, will also share with us important perspectives of this aspect of our branch fund-raising and the need and uses these funds address.

World Union of Christian Women's Organisations will convene in Sydney Australia, in May this year. Five Wellington Members have registered to attend and two CWLANZ members, I think, are taking the opportunity to be there to broaden understanding of the lives and needs of Christian women of the world, sharing their cultures, languages and concerns, virus pandemic permitting. Today as I write this report, we are commemorating International Women's Day, and we are all aware of the objectives of WUCWO, trying to consider them in our all we plan for CWLANZ.

On Saturday CWL Council members took the opportunity to be part of Mission Expo at Viard College, one of many groups within the Archdiocese with Missions to meet every possible human need - a wonderful networking opportunity, inspiring us all to be Mission

Recently I read "being a woman is not about being strong or being brave or being powerful; It is about giving yourself permission to be all that you already are."

As Suzanne Aubert reminds us: "A woman of prayer is capable of everything", so let's go forward with strength and courage towards the next 75 years, with hope and trust.

Christine Paterson

Archdiocesan President Catholic Women's League

