

**Ontario Provincial Council of
The Catholic Women's League of Canada
OPC Convention July 8 - July 13, 2023**

Convention Report: Melina Nobert, Ottawa-Cornwall Diocesan President

Madam President,

Instead of a story where “the two met and fell in love”, I think this one is better described as “an arranged marriage”. For many years there was talk of amalgamation between the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall and the Archdiocese of Ottawa. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis I, decided, in all his wisdom, that this would happen, and it finally came to be in 2020. When the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall was officially formed, it was only a matter of time before the 2 diocesan councils would also join. It just had to be.

There were many jobs to do. The 2 presidents, Angela Gaudet and Claudette Langdon, worked hard with a committee formed of life members from both diocesan councils. Decisions had to be made. A new Policy and Procedure was drafted by the committee, as well as a budget, which still need to be finalized and approved by the new executive. Each parish council had to discuss the upcoming instructed vote necessary for formation of a new diocesan council. Meet and greet events were held, both virtually and in person. Final Diocesan Conventions were held, with all the feelings involved, 100 years for Ottawa and 97 years for Alexandria-Cornwall, both long legacies. All of this happened as well as the many already planned meetings and events in the respective dioceses. It was a busy time. And then there was the job of building a new executive.

In February of 2023, an invitation and plea was sent to all eligible CWL members to consider putting her name forward for a position on the new executive. The response

was very limited. Our Provincial President, Linda Squarzolo, then started calling those same members and asking them personally if they would accept to put their name forward for election to the new executive. Again, the positive response was very limited, but there were now 2 names standing, one for any position except treasurer, and one for a standing chair. These 2 women would be acclaimed as President and as the Faith Committee Chair. Through prayer and perseverance, all the positions, except secretary, were filled before the official amalgamation and the installation of the new executive at the Annual Meeting of Members held on June 10, 2023 in Russell, Ontario in the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall. God is good!

So, now I would like to highlight a few of the ways we can make a difference as learned during our amalgamation.

The first is always to pray. We trust that our Heavenly Father has a plan, and that that plan will be fulfilled in His time. Personally, I prayed and discerned about being on the executive. My husband and I decided that I would wait to see if I got a phone call before putting my name forward. Then the phone call came, and I knew that it was time to say yes. The prayer I turned to when working to build the new executive was the Novena to Mary Undoer of Knots. This prayer never fails to work miracles.

The next way to make a difference is to listen. We spent a lot of time listening during the process of amalgamation. People were uncertain about the future and the unknown. Some people had concerns, some people were excited, but all had a hope in the future of the CWL in our Archdiocese.

The final way to make a difference that I would like to highlight is to invite. Your joy, your pride, and your hope in the Catholic Women's League will attract. Invite women to join you in the CWL. So many want to serve but don't know where to start. So many are ready to say yes if invited. Invite members to step forward into positions of leadership, into prayer, into service, and into social justice.

This is who we are. This is what we do. We are sisters and we are Catholic women who make a difference.

And as with most arranged marriages, we will come to know and love each other too...in beautiful ways that God has already planned for us. It is only up to us to discover them.

Respectfully submitted,

Melina Nobert

Ottawa-Cornwall Diocesan President