



THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA
Ottawa Diocesan Council
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Care for our Common Home



COMMUNIQUE #4

MARCH 2020

TO: Parish Spiritual Development Chairpersons

From: Janet Warren, Diocesan Spiritual Development Chairperson

Dear Sisters in the League,

Please bear with me. There is so much to share with you at this time as we experience the physical isolation from family, friends and the Church.

1. Prayer to Our Lady, Health of the Sick

The following prayer, composed by Pope Francis, is sent to us from our National Chairperson of Spiritual Development Shari Guinta to pray during this time of crisis.

PRAYER TO OUR LADY, HEALTH OF THE SICK

by Pope Francis

(During the coronavirus epidemic)

*O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.
At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain
with steadfast faith.
You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need.
We are certain that you will provide, so that,
as you did in Cana of Galilee,
joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the Father's will
and to do what Jesus tells us -
He who took our sufferings upon Himself
and bore our sorrows
to bring us through the Cross,
to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.
We seek refuge under your protection,
O Holy Mother of God.
Do not despise our pleas—we who are put to the test—
and deliver us from every danger,
O glorious and blessed Virgin.*

Shari Guinta also sent an accompanying video on YouTube. Watch the Holy Father speak directly to those affected by the virus and to medical personnel and volunteers. This is followed by praying the above prayer before the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary at [youtube.com/watch?v=D2wxD3YvfeQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2wxD3YvfeQ).

2. Lenten Morning of Reflection

Saturday, March 21, would have been our Diocesan Lenten Morning of Reflection. After Mass and during a time of Adoration, Fr. Paul Gaudet, our Diocesan Spiritual Advisor and Fr. Waldemar Podlasz, Pastor at Divine Infant, were planning to make themselves available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Benediction was planned for 10:20 am to be followed by a break for some light refreshments prepared by the ladies of Divine Infant. Fr. Paul was to give a reflection with some questions for us to ponder during a period of quiet time as we did at the Advent Retreat. Our time together would end with the Stations of the Cross and the sung Divine Mercy Chaplet. The Stations that I had planned were the ones I referred to in my presentation at League Development Day from the little blue *Pieta Prayer Book*. The meditations are brief. I present them to you here for your private meditation. The prayer book cites them as having originally been used by the Franciscan Fathers on their missions.

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

Meditation: "O Jesus! So meek and uncomplaining, teach me resignation in trials."

Second Station: Jesus Carries His Cross

Meditation: "My Jesus, this Cross should be mine, not Thine; my sins crucified Thee."

Third Station: Our Lord Falls the First Time

Meditation: "O Jesus! By this first fall, never let me fall into mortal sin."

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Meditation: "O Jesus! May no human tie, however dear, keep me from following the road of the Cross."

Fifth Station: Simon the Cyrenean Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

Meditation: "Simon unwillingly assisted Thee; may I with patience suffer all for Thee."

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Meditation: "O Jesus! Thou didst imprint Thy sacred features upon Veronica's veil; stamp them also indelibly upon my heart."

Seventh Station: The Second Fall of Jesus

Meditation: "By Thy second fall, preserve me, dear Lord, from relapse into sin."

Eighth Station: Jesus Consoles the Women of Jerusalem

Meditation: "My greatest consolation would be to hear Thee say: 'Many sins are forgiven thee, because thou hast loved much.'"

Ninth Station: Third Fall of Jesus

Meditation: "O Jesus! When weary upon life's long journey, be Thou my strength and my perseverance."

Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments

Meditation: "My soul has been robbed of its robe of innocence; clothe me, dear Jesus, with the garb of penance and contrition."

Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Meditation: "Thou didst forgive Thy enemies; my God, teach me to forgive injuries and FORGET them."

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Meditation: "Thou art dying, my Jesus, but Thy Sacred Heart still throbs with love for Thy sinful children."

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

Meditation: "Receive me into Thy arms, O Sorrowful Mother; and obtain for me perfect contrition for my sins."

Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid in the Sepulchre

Meditation: "When I receive Thee into my heart in Holy Communion, O Jesus, make it a fit abiding place for Thy adorable body." Amen

3. 'Urbi et Orbi' – Pope Francis – Friday, March 27, 2020

Pope Francis held his special 'Urbi et Orbi' (extraordinary blessing to the City and to the World) on Friday, March 27th from the steps of St. Peter's Basilica to pray for an end to the coronavirus. This blessing is usually given only on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday. Our pope chose to give it at this time because of the gravity of the situation that the world finds itself in. You can watch the whole event here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXTCW-Wals4>.

Pope Francis walked up the ramp in front of St. Peter's in the rain without an umbrella to a covered dais that had been prepared and spoke to the world using all available means of electronic communication. The scene was quite poignant as he looked over an empty St. Peter's Square. He stood in front of two images that hold great significance for the people of Rome: the ancient icon of Mary *Salus Populi Romani* which is usually found in the Basilica of St. Mary Major; and the miraculous crucifix of San Marcello. I urge you to Google both to learn something of their history and relevance for the occasion.

The meditation that he gave was taken from Mark 4: 35-41, "Jesus calms the storm" and focussed our attention on His questions, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" The pope began his meditation saying:

For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice it in people's gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples in the gospel, we were caught off guard by an unexpected turbulent storm."

He concluded the meditation thus:

Dear brothers and sisters, from this place that tells of Peter's rock-solid faith, I would like this evening to entrust all of you to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Health of the People and Star of the stormy Sea. From this colonnade that embraces Rome and the whole world, may God's blessing come down upon you as a consoling embrace. Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: 'Do not be afraid' (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, 'cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us' (cf. 1Pet 5:7).

Go to *Vatican News* on the internet to read the complete text of Pope Francis' address.

At the completion of his address, Pope Francis prayed briefly before each of the sacred images in the portico. He then proceeded through the entrance of St. Peter's Basilica where he exposed the Blessed Sacrament for a time of Adoration and imparted his Apostolic Blessing. With this blessing came the extraordinary opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence. Did you receive it?

4. Divine Mercy Novena

The Divine Mercy Novena begins Good Friday, April 10 and finishes nine days later on Saturday, April 18 in preparation for celebrating the Feast of Divine Mercy on Sunday, April 19. Let us all complete this novena, and then on Sunday, the Feast of Divine Mercy, **spend some time in quiet meditation in front of the icon and pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3:00 pm**. There are specific prayers for each of the days of the novena. You may already have a pamphlet; or you can find them in the Diary of St. Faustina, articles #1209 to #1229; or follow the following link: <https://centrefordivinemercy.org/9-day-novena>.

5. Holy Week

Holy Week will be like nothing we have ever experienced including Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. Seek out these celebrations on the internet. If you have any information concerning events at your own parishes that you would like to share, please email me and I will share them.

I read a reflection this morning concerning Palm Sunday that I would like to share with you to help relieve the distress at not being able to physically participate this year in the Palm Sunday Liturgy. It is an excerpt from a sermon by St. Andrew of Crete (Bishop and Early Church Father 660-740).

LET OUR SOULS TAKE THE PLACE OF PALM BRANCHES

So, let us spread before his feet, not garments or soulless olive branches, which delight the eye for a few hours and then wither, but ourselves, clothed in his grace, or rather, clothed completely in him.

We who have been baptized into Christ must ourselves be the garments that we spread before him. Now that the crimson stains of our sins have been washed away in the saving waters of baptism and we have become white as pure wool, let us present the conqueror of death, not with mere branches of palms but with the real rewards of his victory. Let our souls take the place of the welcoming branches as we join today in the children's holy song: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel.

May you have a holy and blessed celebration of Holy Week and the Easter Triduum in the quiet of your homes.

Janet Warren
Diocesan Spiritual Development Chairperson