

Issue 44
Advent 2021

Communicator



**BC & Yukon
Provincial Council
of the Catholic
Women's League of
Canada**



Welcome from the Editor

As the new editor of *The Communicator*, I'd like to welcome you to the 44th edition of our BC & Yukon provincial newsletter with the theme, The Advent Wreath.

The Advent wreath – the circle – represents God's complete and unending love for us. It symbolizes eternal life which becomes ours through faith in Jesus Christ. "God is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere". (Alain of Lille, *The Rules of Theology*). Richard Rohr, (*The Shape of God: Deepening the Mystery of the Trinity*), views the Trinity as a mutual "circle dance" of love and communion. The candles remind us that we are to shine the light of Christ in this world. As Jesus tells us, "You are the light of the world – let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Mathew 5:14-16)

The first Sunday of Advent symbolized Hope, reminding us that Jesus is coming. The second Sunday symbolizes Faith, reminding us of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. The third Sunday symbolizes Joy, reminding us of the joy the world experienced at the coming of Jesus. The fourth Sunday of Advent symbolizes Peace, reminding us of the message of the angels: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."



I grew up in Austria where, although we did have an Advent wreath, actual Christmas celebrations started on December 6 with the visit of St. Nicholas who put nuts, oranges, and chocolates in our shoes. As a child, I did not see the Christmas tree until about 4 pm on Christmas Eve when the Christ Child (Christkindl) brought the tree through the open window, lit the candles, and set the presents under it. The evidence was the angel hair on the tree! Decorations were simple – chocolates and jelly and meringue rings. We sang Silent Night (Stille Nacht), shared a simple meal and, of course, Christmas cookies. I still make my special Vienna crescent cookies every year and share them with my family and friends.

Our traditions are what makes our experiences unique and on the following pages, you will find stories about Advent and preparation for Christmas, but also stories about our journey through this time of struggle through the pandemic and the challenges of finding ways to Truth and Reconciliation. And to start out, there are two stories celebrating the bounty of our lands and the introduction of our new provincial theme.

I would like to thank all the contributors to this issue. It has been my pleasure to coordinate their stories for your reading pleasure.

Christa Grillmair,

BC & Yukon Provincial Council,

Chair of Communications

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Thanksgiving Altar, 2021

Carol Vanderbyl
Diocesan President, Whitehorse

Our Lady of Victory is the small Catholic church in Whitehorse, Sacred Heart Cathedral being the much larger church and parish. Many of the CWL members belong to that parish and it's been an annual tradition for several years now to make a Thanksgiving display in front of the altar, to remind us of the bounty of the harvest, and the gratitude we want to express to our most generous God for His countless blessings. This year the display went



up as usual, but when it was dismantled a new tradition began. We told our pastor, Father Leo Llamas that he'd get a big beef stew made from all the vegetables. Yes, he got his stew, plenty to share, and yes it was appreciated, and he said it was delicious. There are so many busy days and nights for our priests, they neither have time or energy (or cooking skills) to put a healthy meal together, so the ladies are often toting snacks or meals or treats for the good Father. He often teases us that he doesn't share, but somehow, we find that hard to believe.

Season of Change

Linda Faust,
Secretary, BC & Yukon Provincial Council

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

As the days get cooler and shorter, yard clean-up has almost been complete. Putting things to bed as a fellow gardener once told me. This year our garden

didn't produce all that was hoped for, but the garlic and tomatoes did quite well, considering the lack of natural springtime watering, then the weeks of smoke instead of sunshine. The beautiful big maple trees took all of three days to drop its leaves this past week, covering the ground in a blanket of red. Cleaning the flower garden has been especially interesting to try and figure out how a winter squash had grown out of the flower bed and taken over a big piece of the lawn, producing the many flowers and only one squash. And now, to figure out what to do with this giant?



Embracing Christ in Everyone

Sharon Geiger,
BC & Yukon Provincial Council President

Introducing the new BC & Yukon Provincial Theme for 2021-2023

At the recent meeting of the BC/Yukon provincial council executives, we introduced the new theme for the 2021-2023 term: *Embracing Christ in Everyone*. This theme is important to me for many reasons. I am a hugger as many of you know and not being able to do this during Covid-19 has been a big challenge, as it is probably for everyone. Although there have been a lot of virtual hugs, it is not the same.



This photo, taken in Salmon Arm, is of my father, Bill, who passed away in 2012 and my grandson, Jared, who is now 18 years old. (used with permission)

Embracing is not just hugging; it is also listening to what all ages and walks of life and cultures are saying and being aware of what is needed from you -- may it be a listening ear, food, prayer, clothing, water, money, a shoulder for someone to cry on, a walk, just to sit with them and smile, and much, much more.

One of my favourite songs is *This Little Light of Mine* (even though it is a Christmas song). It always reminds me of Christ as our light and we need to shine that light to everyone around us. The song says “don’t hide it under a bushel” but shine it around the neighbourhood. That neighbour is our world. I know as Catholic women we have been doing this, but we can do more. There are many opportunities out there we just need to make ourselves aware of them; they can be within our own families. Let us embrace Christ and let our lights shine for everyone to see with all our continued good works.

Not Bigger or Better:

Together Holding on to the Poverty of Christmas

Father David John, BC & Yukon Provincial Council Spiritual Advisor

Increasingly, I am wondering whether memories from when I was young are totally accurate or whether they have a bit of “this is how I want to remember things” mixed into them. This is especially true of memories of Christmas; my romanticized image of our childhood Christmas lacks the detail of Mum getting upset when my sister, practicing her ballet dancing, crashes into the tree yet again and more pine needles go everywhere.

But my memory of last Christmas is clear: we were in lockdown and so I was celebrating Mass on my own with only a few ‘Zoom’ cameras for company. Desperately wanting to make what felt like a bereft Christmas have some meaning, I decided that I would celebrate Midnight Mass actually at midnight. This was the first time I had celebrated the Christmas Mass at midnight for very many years. While my memory from childhood was that Church on Christmas Eve was always at midnight (*which might or might not be true*), I don’t know when I last did a ‘Midnight Mass’ at midnight! I do remember twenty something years ago the parish council asking if we could have Mass on Christmas Eve earlier, explaining that it was difficult for the old people, and it cost a fortune for those who didn’t have cars so had to come in by taxi as there was no public transport at that time of night, and it was too late for families because the kids would just get more ‘hyper’ being up so late. So, midnight Mass stopped.

But last year I thought that, with Mass only being available on-line, there might be a number of people who, on Christmas Eve, might finish their day near midnight who might like to tune in and once more experience what we remember from childhood, that is, the clock striking twelve and Mass beginning. For me, rather than at 5pm which is our current time for ‘Midnight Mass’, somehow at the ‘dead of night’ it was easier to imagine the child Jesus being born. And in that still and peaceful moment, to be filled with wonder and awe.

And by the way, I also decided that it would be so good to celebrate this ‘Midnight-Mass-at-midnight’ in a stable open to the elements. Great idea, but it turned out to be minus fourteen centigrade that night, so I froze – I mean I really got cold! By the end of Mass, I was having difficulty speaking because I was shivering so much. So, before you ask, no, I won’t be doing that again. But as we approach another Christmas my hope is that I will be able to touch that almost undefinable element that we managed to touch last year; that aspect that didn’t seek Christ in excess or in extravagance. I won’t say that it was simplicity, as I had to have a lot of expensive electronics to make a broadcast with four cameras from a stable in the middle of nowhere. But somehow it was just that bit easier to feel God saying, “I love you so much I want to come to you.” Was it that I felt so cold, weak, and pathetic as I knelt there shivering it was easier to long for Christ’s coming? I don’t know, but it seemed to be a place apart from the normal commercialism of Christmas.

So, what will I do this year? The answer is: probably the same as every other year, but I hope I will be able to hold onto some of the ‘poverty’ that was given to me through being thoroughly frozen, and I hope that I will try to resist expressing my faith in “God with us” by going bigger or better. But above all, I hope I can celebrate with others who are actually physically present! I so much hope that lots of people can be in church this Christmas, particularly our kids, so that they can build memories to cherish for years to come.



Celebrate the Advent Wreath

*Sharon Geiger,
BC & Yukon Provincial Council President*



When I was a young mom with four young children, preparing for Christmas was a very hectic time of the year so I needed to find time for Advent activities for my kids. I found a book on Advent called *Celebrate...God Sent His Son!* by Sondra Burnett. This book gave the history and symbols of Advent and also had many activities in it, which helped my children and I celebrate Advent in a better way than we were used to. This book was very useful. I continued with Advent traditions until my children were in their teenage years.

The one activity we kept up was the advent wreath. When my children left home and I became my parish's coordinator for children's and adult education, I continued providing materials for anyone from the parish to make advent wreaths of their own. Members of the parish came together, and each family or member assembled their own wreath(s) which Father then blessed. They took them home to enjoy and celebrate the Advent season. This was really a parish community event. Since COVID-19 I have been making kits for anyone who wants one. They pick the kits up in the church vestibule and then take them home to make on their own or with their families. This has been a wonderful tradition that has brought joy to everyone and particularly for me who misses my children and grandchildren very much, but I do have my husband to help me celebrate the Advent season.

May you be able to celebrate the Advent season with anticipation, hope, peace, joy, and love. May we use the advent wreath every day to help bring us closer to God and to make us more loving children of God.

How Do Christmas Traditions Help Us Prepare for Our Lord's Coming?

*Laura Esposito,
BC & Yukon Provincial Council, Chair of Spiritual Development*

Most families have Christmas traditions. Mine is no different.

Some traditions revolve around food - an integral part of Italian culture. Mom was busy before Christmas making several goodies: pizzelle, shortbread, mincemeat tarts, Christmas fruit cake, "peaches", cannoli, etc.). They would be enjoyed starting Christmas Eve. I heard the stories of how Mom learned to make them. *Panettone* would be bought and *torrone* would accompany the other sweets. Christmas Eve dinner is a meatless meal. Spaghetti with broccoli and pesto would begin the meal, then a stew with baccala (salted cod) and a green salad, followed by an assortment of cookies, and a bowl of various nuts. Chestnuts had been roasted. A mandarin orange was offered to everyone. Traditionally 13 things (symbolic of Christ and his 12 apostles) would be eaten. Christmas dinner was turkey with all the trimmings then all the desserts. My siblings continue making many of these delicacies and, when I gather with them for Christmas, I help make some of the goodies. Decorating the house meant setting up the Christmas tree, and the Nativity scene which I continue to do.

Music lifts the soul, especially mine. I remember Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* album, and Mario Lanza's *Christmas Hymns and Carols* album. My extensive Christmas CD collection includes traditional, pop, and instrumental music. My various moods and activities dictate which one I listen to. I attend live concerts presented around this time. In late November the Rotary Choir present their Christmas program. The sail past and the festival of lights follow and, as part of that evening, children's choirs perform. The purity of children's voices brings joy to my soul. I also attend the elementary and high school band concerts. While still teaching, my school choir gave a yearly Christmas performance. I now gather with two families, playing the piano, while they lift their voices in song. What a beautiful evening it always turns out to be!

Connecting with people: family in Italy and Argentina, people I have met on my travels, ones who lived in Prince Rupert and now live elsewhere, is important. I send out many Christmas cards because I enjoy receiving them and learning friends' news.

Giving is important. Among several things I do are supporting the Salvation Army, making soup/sandwiches as often as I can at my church which holds a weekly soup kitchen, giving of my musical talent because I receive so much more in return.

Attending Mass is an integral part of my life. Advent is a special time. Preparing for our Lord's coming takes on special meaning. Traditionally, I travel to the lower mainland, to be with family. This was not possible last year and since I am not travelling again this year, I will invite close friends to attend Mass with me, then have a meal or two in my home. A new tradition in my home in 2020 was lighting the Advent wreath.

Some traditions remain for a lifetime; some for a short while; some are new; some old. My traditions bring me closer to the true meaning of Christmas. God gave us his only Son and Jesus gave us the greatest gift of all, captured in one word – Love! I wish for each of you a Blessed Advent.

Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo!



Celebrating Advent

Catherine L'Heureux

*BC & Yukon Provincial Council
President Elect and Chair of Organization*

In my early 20's, I was the Christian Family Life chair for our Catholic Women's League. Through this wonderful job, I was inspired to start celebrating Advent.

So how did we celebrate? First, I got all my Christmas shopping done before Advent began. I then looked for the Advent books at the entrance of our church. Our family would set aside a day to gather greenery in the forest and then I would make advent wreaths for our friends, family, and neighbours. I delighted in making the wreaths and enjoyed making them unique each year.

When our five children were young, Advent was a precious, precarious, priceless, and very noisy time. They loved lighting and blowing out the pink and purple candles on the wreath. Their singing was hardy, off key and full of enthusiasm. Their intentions were innocent, heartfelt, and caring. I particularly remember the night one of the children set the couch on fire. The match flipped out of their hand and landed at the back of the couch. Fortunately, we were able to quickly extinguish the fire.

We always bought beautiful, religious Advent calendars and let the children take turns opening the little doors. They loved it! One year my little grandson Gabriel asked for a chocolate Advent calendar. He assured me he could hold it on the way home. With me in the front seat driving and him in the back in a car seat he managed to eat all 25 chocolates before we arrived home. You should have seen his face! He loved it!

Today it is wonderful to see our children with Advent wreaths in their own homes. Annually the older grandchildren bring mini wreaths home from their Catholic schools.

Now the two things I try to do during Advent is not attend Christmas parties and fast. I fast so I can feast on the word of God. Each night my husband and I light the candles on the wreath, pray, sing, and smile at each other. It is so peaceful, quiet, and reverent. We love it! It is such a wonderful time to pray for all our families and friends, the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of Columbus, the sick, suffering and dying, and social justice issues. It gives us a tremendous sense of well-being to hand all these people and issues over to God. This way we can Embrace Christ in Everyone and it is one way to be Catholic and Living it. Happy Advent, everyone!



Preparation for Advent Remembrances with my Nana

*Sylvia Jurys
BC & Yukon Provincial Council
1st Vice-President and Chair of Community Life*

What does one very little girl do when her grandmother, fondly known as Nana, talked about the story of the Holy Season of Advent, "Prepare the Way of the Lord" when all that I was thinking about was the ONE gift that I hoped to receive on Christmas Eve when Father Christmas came down the soot-filled chimney?

Being an only child of a single mom, whose mother was blind, it wasn't easy street in Manchester when most families were in the same situation after the war, and food was scarce and rationed.

But you know, all the neighbours helped each other to get by.

The Advent wreath that I remember looked like bottle brushes that Nana wound cleverly into a circle. I am still not sure how the four lit purple candles were able to stand up without falling over. But you know, my Nana was able to do it with her nimble fingers that were her eyes!

During the four weeks, we had to get ready to meet the baby Jesus on His birthday, so, every day after tea (that is the name of the afternoon meal in England) we said the Rosary together. Nana loved the Hail Holy Queen. Her favourite Saint was Philomena, patroness of infants and youth, and became a martyr for her faith because she refused to marry.

Nana was my teacher of my Catholic Faith. My mother was not born Catholic but converted later in life but did not come to Mass very often. Nana and I, walked arm-in- arm to Mass most days. We had a very special relationship, and I spent an incredible time in her arms.

Nana always carried a beautiful cross and her rosary beads with her and I remember the day that she gave the cross to me and asked me to put it in her hand when she passed away; she wanted to take it with her, so I brought the cross with me when I immigrated to Canada. Alas, I did not hear that Nana had died until after the burial. I was in a dilemma, what was I going to do now!

Our Blessed Lord found a way. When I lost my beloved husband to prostate cancer in 2015, his body was cremated and two years later I took his remains to Toronto where he was buried at beautiful Holy Cross Cemetery in Toronto.

I put Nana's cross with a few favourite things of Ray's in the pouch and put it with him in the grave. I breathed a thankful breath that I had almost fulfilled Nana's wishes.

I am so happy to share my precious memories with you.

Wishing you a blessed Advent, with love and prayers for you always.



Preparing for Christmas

Suzanne Eng,

BC & Yukon Provincial Council, Chair of Christian Family Life

Since the mid 1980's, I have sung with my parish choir for the Christmas Eve children's Mass and then for Christmas morning. We start practicing in late October, as we usually try to do something new and special each year. Our practices start as weekly but end up at least twice a week in the last weeks. In addition to the Children's Mass, we generally sing carols for about half an hour prior to Mass. The church is full, and we have found that music helps to focus the congregation on the reason for being at Mass.

This all changed of course last year. Right now, our parish has a few people who take turns preparing and singing the hymns at Mass on Sundays. There is no choir as such.

I have asked our music director if there will be a choir now that the only restriction at Mass is to wear a mask. But it looks like there will be no Christmas choir.

I love to sing at Mass. St. Augustine said that "He prays twice who sings his prayer". And at Christmas time, there are so many beautiful hymns. Our choir got good enough to sing in 4-part harmony. Traditionally, when we sang Silent Night at Communion, we would sing one verse in English, then have solos in German, French, Tagalog (Philippino) and sometimes Polish or one of the African languages. It all depended on who knew the words in his or her native language and was willing to do the solo.

I really miss the preparation of the music. I miss the friendships that we formed as we practiced for Sunday Mass and then the extra hours for such special occasions. None of us were professional singers. Some of the members could not read music. Some of us could. We helped each other out in learning our parts. But we were all enthusiastic. And we were all singing for God's glory. I hope that soon, we will be able to have choirs leading the singing at regular Sunday Masses, and at Christmas and Easter, too.

I'm going to finish this submission with a photo of my "Christmas" cactus that loves to bloom both at Thanksgiving and at Christmas.

Wishing you all God's blessings.



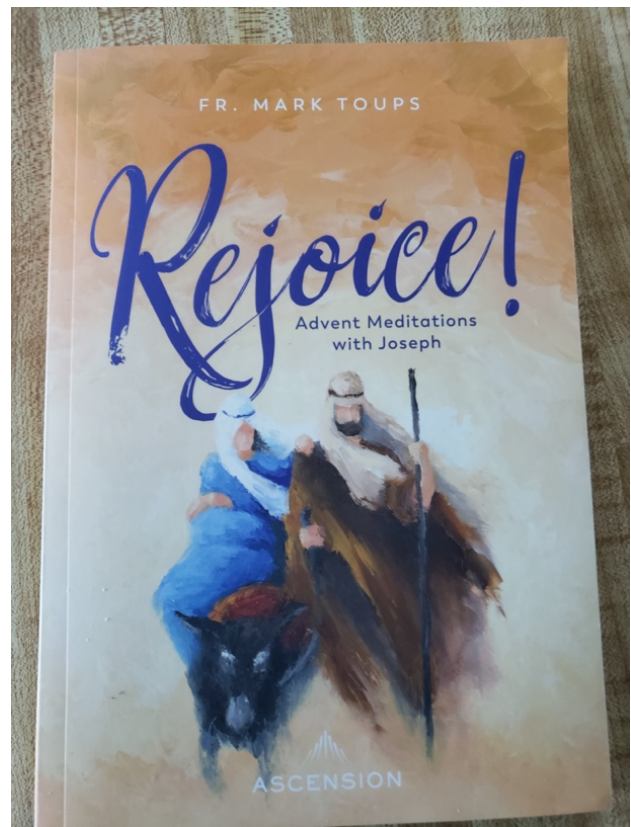
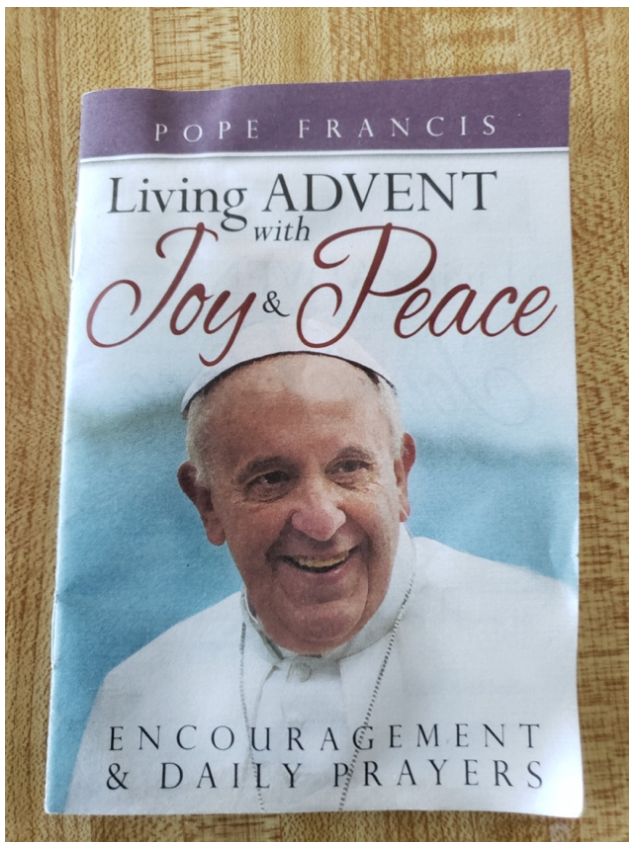
Recommended Books for Advent

Sheila Doherty

BC & Yukon Provincial Council, Chair of Education & Health

The first thing I like to do is get out my Advent wreath. I have several daily prayer booklets for the wreath or Advent, so I try to read those daily during Advent. I've attached one of the daily booklets that I ordered from Novalis, *Pope Francis, Living Advent with Joy & Peace*. The other book, *Rejoice, Advent Meditations with Joseph*, was a gift to me last year, at the beginning of The Year of St. Joseph, announced by Pope Francis for 2021. It was published by Ascension Publishing and is a beautiful prayer journal with daily meditations. Each week of *Rejoice!* has a theme that allows you to dive deeply into the lessons Joseph has to share about welcoming Jesus into his life. Each week's theme will help you walk closer and closer to the ultimate goal of preparing for the person of Jesus, not just preparing for the day of Christmas. I started this journey last year but never finished so I plan to complete it this Advent.

I thought of Mary in her pregnancy during Advent, as both my boys were born in May, so I was pregnant in December of 1987 and 1991. I could relate to all the feelings, emotions, fear, love that Mary felt as she carried our Savior in her sacred womb. What a precious gift God gave us, through Blessed Mary.



A Very Personal Nativity

*Gisela Montague,
BC & Yukon Provincial Council Past President*



Last Advent Season our parish priest at St. Mary's Parish in Chilliwack, asked the elementary school children to bring their favorite toy (stuffed animal) to our nativity scene to be there by Christmas Day to see the Baby Jesus. The children were very proud to participate in this way. The stable was built by our priest as well, getting the youth involved. What a wonderful project!

My Favourite Traditions

*Sharon Ciebin
BC & Yukon Provincial Council Treasurer*

I love the preparation and anticipation of Christmas! I have three favorite traditions which immediately spring to mind. My first is to bake the best butter tarts in the world from a recipe given to me by a dear friend when my children were small. My next is my love for Advent and I eagerly await the four Sundays to see the families who come forward with the candle each week and hearing the meaning of each candle and then reflecting on the message in my life. Finally, the most recent tradition is our Giving Tree. Each year a barren tree, with no leaves is adorned with hundreds of paper tags, each signifying a gift requested by a marginalized person in our community. Once a gift is purchased, we wrap it up in beautiful gift bags and replace the tag with a beautiful ornament, which is then used to decorate one of my parish's trees on Christmas Eve. What JOY to witness the transformation and bring light to those in need.



The Jesse Tree

*Carmen Tellier,
CWL President, Church of the Ascension*

When our three children were very young, we lived in the Yukon, in Whitehorse. Our parish at Sacred Heart was one big happy family and we felt so much an integral part of it. They introduced the “Jesse Tree” to us. On the first Sunday of Advent, a dead looking tree was brought into the church and placed near the Altar. The tree was simply a deciduous tree that had lost all its leaves in the fall, so it looked quite dead. Each family was given a handout explaining that Jesus descended from the root of Jesse, and our tree represented Jesus’s family tree. The hand-out contained many symbols from Bible stories that refer to Jesus, such as Isaiah’s “Jesse” prophecy (Isaiah 11:1-11). The symbol for this story of Jesus’ coming is a tree stump with a single branch growing from it. The story of John the Baptist is taken from Matthew 3: 13-17. The symbol for John the Baptist is a scallop shell. Mary is represented by a white lily.

At home with our children, the families would read the bible stories to our children and explain the symbols to them. Then, each child would choose their favourite symbol from that week’s stories and make and decorate a paper decoration depicting that symbol. On Sunday when we went to Church, each of our children would carry their little decoration and place it on the Jesse tree near the Altar, immediately after the Advent Wreath had been lit. What a wonderful memory I have of our three young ones going up to the altar to proudly place their symbol on the tree. We learned together as a family, reading the Bible, and learning about the tree of Jesse. And you should have seen that little dead looking tree come alive. The children enjoyed this activity so much, that we even had to have our own Jesse tree at home, and they made decorations for that one too. It was even more beautiful that the Christmas tree! What a special Advent memory this is for me.



The Advent Wreath - Gone Horribly Wrong

Leanne Forest

Victoria Diocesan Chair of Service and Member of St. Edward's CWL, Duncan



As a child, I always enjoyed the readings, the ceremony, the anticipation of the advent wreath. Each fall, my mom would craft a wreath from cuttings of the trees and gardens around our home. Then she would take several of us children with her when she went to the store to purchase advent candles, new ones every year. Four tapers - three purple and one pink, and one large ivory pillar candle for the middle. So, many decades ago, as a young mother of three preschool boys, I wanted to re-create her love of the season, her handiwork, and the advent ritual.

New to the me, and new to the 1970's, was a recipe for a home-made crafting clay made mostly with flour, water and lots of salt. Not a problem on our small monthly income. I managed to find an afternoon and evening time slot that was void of appointments and commitments and spent hour upon hour modelling all sorts of fruit and vegetables and pinecones. These were assembled, bases all touching and connected to form a circle, leaving open spaces for the candles. A long, low-temperature trip through the oven followed, as the wreath was baked. Then, once cooled, the wreath was painted with watercolours in all the appropriate shades and hues. It was heavy, but an old-world looking creation of which I was very proud!

The wreath sat in its place of honour on our little kitchen table. Each Sunday of the Advent season was extra special as we lit the appropriate candle(s) and explained, in pre-school language, the significance of the weekly readings and prayers. We repeated this little celebration each weeknight before we ate dinner. Then came Christmas and we lit the big pillar candle. I suspect that candle may have been a bit anti-climactic as the boys were caught up in their Christmas trips to visit grandparents and their special gifts.

At the end of the Christmas season, I dutifully wrapped the wreath in brown paper, put it into an old dress box, and stored it in the basement crawl space where it remained until just prior to Advent the following year. That second year, I eagerly reached into the crawl space, pulled out the box, and rushed upstairs. As I opened the box, I felt the weight of the wreath, but to my shock and sorrow, the humidity in that crawl space had reduced my beautiful creation to a colourful but moldy and smelly blob of paste.

Today, as I recall that particular time in my life, I love the memories of the season - the wonder and anticipation of the boys, the pride of their father as he explained the meanings of the readings, and my joy in the lighting the candles. But I gag as I recall the horrid mess of that first and only hand-crafted advent wreath.

A New and Challenging Advent Story for 2021

Sandi Digras - Ascension Parish, Parksville

While we get ready to celebrate Advent and Christmas this year I am reflecting on another biblical message: the Good Samaritan story; a tale for modern times and the battle for personal space and safety versus kindness and generosity.

As we remember, the traveler on the road was beaten and left for dead. The first person to pass the injured man was a priest, who crossed the road and continued walking. The second person to pass the injured man was a Levite, a priest's assistant. He also crossed the road and continued walking without helping the man. The Samaritan man who was from an enemy country of Samaria stopped helped the injured man and spent his own funds at the inn.

Considering the fears of today we should ask ourselves. Did he ponder if helping him was a good idea? Did he wonder if he was endangering himself? Did it conflict with his beliefs? Clearly not. He suspended his personal prejudices and only saw a person in need.

Now we are faced with the same challenges. I have gone from a stance of anger to a stance of "I just don't understand why the unvaccinated feel they can take up spaces in hospitals when they succumb to COVID-19 while the rest of us followed the protocol and are willing to mask, distance and take the two shots to safeguard the rest." Valid questions, but in the light of the good Samaritan story, are they the right or even helpful questions to ask?

The biblical lesson Jesus taught that it is easy to love our friends and family but not those strangers we don't like or trust. Right now, even that idea is being challenged. Families and friends are no longer safe with each other. Divisions have developed over who is vaccinated and the selfish motives of those who are not. Recently, Thanksgiving brought that to light in many confrontational ways.

Now Christmas is coming, and we again are faced with an even more troubling situation. Cold temperatures and homeless and isolated folks who are metamorphically on the side of the road bruised and sick. They have nowhere to shelter and nowhere to isolate if the pandemic attacks their weakened resistance. There are so few good Samaritans and so much help is needed.

Hopefully one lesson we should learn from this parable is the fact we need to look for conflict resolutions rather than confrontation on opposing views and establish guidelines around the dinner table. No politics, pandemic, or other contentious subjects. Instead ask others to share good memories of past gatherings and why they were so special.

Advent is the time before celebration. A time to thank God for what he has blessed us with and to share our blessings with others As we light each advent candle, we must renew our pledges of Hope, Peace, Joy, and most of all Love.



A Quiet Space

Angelina Stiglich, BC & Yukon Provincial Council Chair of Resolutions



My husband and I like to take an annual trip to Hawaii; we love to bask in the tropical sunshine. It is also the location where we first met! Due to the pandemic, we have been unable to make our annual trip and have instead explored the beauties of our own province. We have visited Whistler several times and found a new appreciation for the beauty of our mountains and lakes. One of our trips took place in October of this year. We had several days of mild, sunny weather so decided to spend one day driving to Lillooet to visit the Xaxli'p First Nation; this is a place I have visited only once in my life.

I trace aboriginal roots through my maternal grandmother, who was a member of the Xaxli'p Nation. I was never able to meet her as she passed away when my mother was a very young child. My mother was raised in foster care, far from the lands my ancestors called home. I have always felt the pull of those roots and longed to learn more about this part of my heritage. My mother connected with many family members when I was a grown woman and I have heard stories of life on these lands. I visited Xaxli'p only once before and was affected by the strong sense of community.

This trip was especially poignant, given the recent emphasis on Truth and Reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and the church. Though my visit was brief, it was one I will always remember. I connected with some family members and felt like I was being welcomed home. Not far from the band office sits Our Lady of Lourdes parish church. We visited the church, which was unlocked. It sits quietly in the valley, surrounded by the residents of the nation, and is visited only by a few band members. Some churches on Indigenous land have been destroyed or defaced in the past few months, but Our Lady of Lourdes remains a symbol of calm rationality. This offered me a sense of



hope. Violence and anger do not change the past; instead, they create an unsettled, chaotic future. Though the church is not well attended, some of the faithful still visit and pray quietly in its tranquil space. I knelt and asked Our Lady to watch over the Xaxli'p Nation and to help all of us reach a new era of peace and understanding.

As I prepare for Advent season this year, I will keep this sense of hope and peace in my heart and wish the same for all of my CWL sisters.

God Bless.

Taking Action on Reconciliation

Sylvia DeSousa

Prince George Diocesan President and Member of Christ the King CWL in Kitimat, B.C.

It was with great sadness that we learned about the 215 unmarked graves at the Kamloops Residential School back in May of this year. And then, on the heels of that, several other grave sites were discovered. This issue hit us hard. With all the scandals of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, especially over the last two decades, and now this? These are complicated stories and issues, as we do not know all the details and facts, but it certainly was heart breaking, especially hearing stories of children being taken away from their families, some of them never returning, and families not knowing what ever happened to them.

Many members in our council felt angry and frustrated with the church, and the fact that, overall, the church was slow in addressing these issues. What could we, as Catholic Women's League members, do? We didn't know where to begin. With prayer and consultation with Father Pier Pandolfo, our Diocesan Spiritual Advisor, we believed we had to reach out in some way, and so we began.

In June, our CWL Parish Executive gathered and decided to write up and send an apology to First Nations People. (Interestingly, over the following few weeks we began to find several prayers and apologies from Catholics throughout Canada as well, including one from Archbishop Michael Miller of Vancouver.) So, we decided to include all those prayers and apologies in our *Package of Apologies and Prayers*, which we printed on decorative paper and put together in a lovely blue folder. We presented one of these folders to our MLA, Mr. Ellis Ross, who is from the Haisla Nation in Kitimat, one to the Haisla Chief, Chrystal Smith, and Council, and one to Marilyn Furlan, one of the Haisla Elders. They were all well received.



Then, on September 3rd, Kitimat Mayor and Council held a flag raising ceremony raising an 'Orange First Nations Designed Flag' to commemorate Residential School Children. Ten of our Members, wearing their CWL scarves, were present to support the Haisla People. On September 30th at the first Truth and Reconciliation Event, CWL members worked along with the Haisla setting up and manning one of their tents.



For our October CWL membership meeting, we invited Elder, Marilyn Furlan, to come and speak to us on her experience with Residential Schools. As she shared and spoke to us of her family and their many experiences, there were tears, but there was laughter too. Marilyn shared some heart-breaking stories, but also some good ones. In the middle of her sharing, she looked out at us and said, "Please do not feel guilty. This is not your fault". We were there together as mothers, grandmothers, daughters, aunts, cousins, and nieces, hearing her story and validating her. And we felt validated by her as well. At the end of her presentation, our council gifted Marilyn with a CWL shawl with that beautiful insignia of our Blessed Mother and the words 'Wrapped in the Arms of Our Mother' and a bouquet of flowers. We all cried.

Jesus Christ is "The Light of the World". As Advent approaches, let us focus on being "The Light of Christ" in this world, if it only means listening and validating someone's pain and sorrow. I believe that that alone brings healing. There is nothing wrong with saying you are sorry or apologizing, even if you personally did nothing wrong. Let us be generous with kindness, in our words and in our deeds.

Wishing you all a most Blessed Advent, discovering new ways of bringing light into people's lives and the many areas of darkness in this world.

The Blanket Ceremony

Gerry Heywood

Chair of Spiritual Development, Victoria Diocesan Council

Many of us have heard of the term “Blanket Ceremony” in respect to indigenous matters but, like me, had no real idea what this was about.

It is my personal belief that the things we need to know are presented to us at the right time. This is what happened for the 57 members at our Victoria diocesan CWL interim meeting, October 23, 2021, held at Ladysmith on Vancouver Island. In fact, not only were we told about this ceremony, we actually did it!

Three indigenous members of Vancouver Island University led us through an exercise designed to help us understand challenges brought about by European contact and settlement. These challenges are very much in the news of the day.

Our facilitators put blankets on the floor, and we were invited to stand on them. The many blankets represented original land and we were to be the people of this land. The head facilitator represented the “government” and with different legislations and actions, we, the indigenous people, were removed from where we stood, and the blankets folded to make a new reduced surface. This represented removal of children, disease, lack of health care, residential schools plus treaties and laws. This took an hour. When we were finished, we sat in a talking circle. Each person was asked to describe how they felt and what they learned. This, also, took an hour.



It soon became apparent that each participant experienced the past in their own unique way. Our facilitators shared their feelings of grief and loss. Some of our members told of their sorrow of not knowing this history and the impact Canada had on its indigenous people. Some said that they had known much of this history through university in the 1960's and about the residential school experience through more recent media accounts. A few of our members shared that they had, themselves, adopted children from the “'60's scoop” and loved them dearly. They gave these children care and a loving home and love them to this day. A couple of other members said they have indigenous in-laws and grandchildren who are fully part of their families. It is my opinion that all participants saw the different views and hurts of the same government legislations and the impact these laws had and continue to have on people to this day.

I think that the blanket ceremony affected all the people in the room, educated us and allowed us to see into the hearts of all sincere participants.

A Marigold Garden for the Children

Anna Gilbert

Treasurer of the Diocese of Kamloops Council

This past summer, a beautiful Marigold Garden was planted on the Williams Lake First Nation's Sugar Cane Reserve in memory of the 215 children, who lay lost but never forgotten, in the unmarked graves at the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Reserve in Kamloops, British Columbia.



The lovely memory garden was organized by Anna Gilbert, CWL Kamloops Diocesan Treasurer and her husband Rick Gilbert, Counsellor at Williams Lake First Nations. Orange marigolds were chosen, as the colour orange represents the "Every Child Matters" movement across Canada. Anna expresses that the marigolds help her imagine the little children; their little souls blooming up from the protecting arms of Mother Earth, where they lay hidden and lost but never forgotten, and soaring to the sun." "Found at last."

The marigolds were planted by students and staff from Little Chiefs Daycare and Primary School on Reserve, as well as Williams Lake First Nation staff and Sugar Cane community members.

When Anna related her plan for a Marigold Memorial Garden during a Kamloops Diocesan CWL Connects meeting, several ladies expressed a desire to donate towards the purchase of the marigolds. Rick had ordered the marigolds from Williams Lake Canadian Tire and much to his grateful surprise, when he went to pick them up, he was told, "No charge." The much-appreciated donation from the Kamloops Diocese CWL Ladies, was then used towards lighting and the beautiful commemorative sign. The Band is preparing to rename the road on which the memorial garden is located "Survivors Way", in memory of all Residential School survivors.



Prayers for Advent Candle Lighting

First Week

All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God, forever and ever. ~AMEN.

Second Week

God of power and mercy open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy so that we may share his wisdom and become one with him when he comes in glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. ~AMEN.

Third Week

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the birthday of Christ experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We ask this through Christ our Lord. ~AMEN.

Fourth Week

Father, all-powerful God, your eternal Word took flesh on our earth when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of your plan. Lift our minds in watchful hope to hear the voice which announces his glory and open our minds to receive the Spirit who prepares us for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. ~AMEN.

Prayers taken from [**A Prayer Book of Catholic Devotions**](#)

This publication is published twice a year and we welcome submissions from parish councils, diocesan councils, provincial council members and spiritual advisors.

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This publication is not intended to replace communiques or reports, but to share events, stories and milestones with our members throughout British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.

Our next issue's theme will be Alleluia – He is Risen!

The deadline to submit articles for the Easter Issue Number 45 is March 4, 2022.