

Pembroke Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada
Spring Zoom Meeting, March 6, 2021, Oral Report
Pat Weller, Community Life Chair

One issue of concern under the Community Life standing committee is dignity and rights of persons, part of which is explained as the “encouragement of members to actively denounce social injustice and violation of human rights issues at home and abroad such as trafficking, domestic violence, bullying, homelessness, poverty or issues affecting Indigenous peoples” (Executive Handbook CL-49).

This is a tall order but taking a closer look at it, we can break it down to individual issues on which members may wish to educate themselves. For instance, February 22 was designated as Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

There are a number of Victim Service agencies across the diocese providing support for victims of human trafficking. Local to my community, the human trafficking awareness campaign is led by Victim Services of Renfrew County (VSRC). A search of VSRC website lists some useful information such as “Early Warning Signs for Human Trafficking” of which some are listed below:

- having a significantly older boyfriend
- showing signs of physical trauma
- victim has or is currently experiencing homelessness
- has an increase in income without explanation
- is very secretive about his/her whereabouts
- is chatting online with people his/her parents or friends have never met
- has suddenly changed his/her appearance such as dressing more provocatively

The website also lists links to a number of victim service providers who can be contacted for help such as Renfrew County Committee for Abused Women (RCCAW), Bernadette McCann House for Women, Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, and Ontario's Confidential Human Trafficking Helpline. Abusive situations take many forms and we are often unaware they are happening in our own communities. Increasing our awareness of human trafficking is one step toward ensuring the dignity and rights of persons. The victims could be our own sons, daughters, or our neighbour's children.

May our faith, with the guidance of our patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel, give courage to our actions.