

Pembroke Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada
Annual Diocesan Convention March 25, 2024 Chalk River Lions Hall
Father Michael Coyne Spiritual Director Pembroke Diocese.

Greetings ladies, of the CWL, I wish to first send my prayers and best wishes to all of you, and your families in this annual spiritual director's message. As I write these words to you all we stand liturgically as a church on the cusp of two major Solemnities, the ascension of the Lord and the Solemnity of Pentecost. These two Solemnities I feel truly represent the guiding light of your Catholic organization. Evangelization for God and Country. Although it is true that each of us have been given this great commission, by Jesus Christ himself, how we choose to communicate these divine truths will influence their effect reception to those we try to evangelize to.

First, we must always remember that this is the good news, the message is positive so let us try to stay positive when we evangelize. In Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* he talks about needing joy in our proclamation of the good news in today's world. He says, "Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved." So let us always try to be joyful in this great and sometimes difficult task of evangelization. Second, evangelization needs to be communicated as relevant, and meaningful for the listener, not just the speaker. We must keep in our mind that communicating the faith is not arguing to beat an opponent, but instead evangelization is an ongoing dialogue meant to convince someone of the truth. So, our attitude as the evangelist is a desire to persuade without defeating. Listening is key to this dynamic and is fundamental in this process as it helps enable us to learn what interests or concerns the other person. We must listen to their questions before proposing any answers. Third our message must be clear and so we need to avoid complexity and obscure language.

Now we have explored a little on how to deliver the good news but now let us look at our internal disposition as we evangelize this good news. Here I have two points which I feel aid in the effectiveness of our evangelization efforts. They are empathy and courtesy. These I feel are essential qualities that we need to cultivate within ourselves first to be ready to evangelize the good news to the world around us. Finally, we have courtesy, this last quality which is very important in evangelizing the good news. If we do not take care of the way of the way we talk to people we could run the risk of alienating those we wish to connect with. Clarity is not incompatible with kindness. With kindness we can hold a conversation, but without kindness failure is almost guaranteed from the outset.

In conclusion I want to point out that throughout all these qualities and methods of how we should communicate the good news, there is I feel one over-arching truth of what evangelization is at its core. That truth is Evangelization at its core is a potential *friendship*. It is essentially simply sharing our relationship with Christ cultivated through prayer. To introduce or re-introduce Jesus Christ to the other is the greatest good of human friendship. Throughout the history of the church starting with the lord himself, Christianity has been spread principally through one-on-one encounters. Scripture tells us this truth that it is not good for us to be alone. St. Augustine wrote that, "no one can be known for who he is except through the friends he has." On a more personal note, I wish to impart to you my personal enjoyment of being your Spiritual Director over these last few years, and God willing I look forward to continuing to journey with you all this coming year. For God and Country!