



**President's Report at Annual Convention, Dallas, TX
September 8, 2017**

Your Excellency, reverend fathers, deacons, religious, Council sisters and guests – what a special journey this two years has been and a joy for me to have the privilege of serving our beloved National Council of Catholic Women as President. For the past 41 years, one constant in my life has been my involvement in Council in a rural mission diocese of 65,000 Catholics. I thank all of you for the confidence you placed in me to lead this prestigious organization. I give the glory to God who is with us always and to his mother, Mary, our guide and counselor in this life.

Taking a trip down memory lane, I wanted to touch on what we have accomplished these last two years. This is not a one woman show. I say we because decisions made were approved by the executive committee or voted on by the Board of Directors as per their responsibilities to NCCW. Here are the highlights:

- **Young Messiah movie: This was shown in 24 locations across the country and attended by bishops, clergy, religious, families, high school students and Council sisters having a dinner and movie night out. We are grateful to Motive Entertainment for this opportunity which raised approximately \$35,000 for NCCW.**
- **A new look for Catholic Woman magazine produced by FAITH Catholic featuring a cover girl each issue from various parts of the country to showcase our work along with our regular articles by commission chairs, province director highlights and content on current topics of interest to women of all ages and stages of life.**
- **Million Works of Mercy that turned into 2,048, 510 corporal and spiritual works of mercy counted during the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy called by Pope Francis in 2016. I want to give special recognition to NCCW supporting member Jane Carter who brought this idea to NCCW. My only question was – who is going to count all these works and she did! I call her “cheerleader” because that is what she does – cheering the leader on with**

ideas. Jane, please come forward for a special gift from Italy.

- **The NCCW pilgrimage to Italy included Venice, Padua, Florence, Siena, Assisi, Orvieto and Rome. The highlight of each day was liturgy in an historic Church celebrated by Fr. James Stembler, past Chair of the Spiritual Advisors. Through special intervention, our group received reserved seating at the Wednesday General Audience. I had the once in a lifetime experience of meeting His Holiness. Pope Francis. As I presented him with the certificate representing the Works of Mercy, he held my hand and smiled as he said – “You will continue to do these, will you?”. Of course, your Holiness was my reply and after a brief exchange he moved on. I can say without a doubt God guided this choice as the successor to Peter. The light of Christ was evident in his eyes.**
- **Each summer, NCCW has been a sponsor of a major gathering offering the opportunity to showcase our work. In 2016, NCCW was the inaugural sponsor of the Domestic Violence Symposium co-hosted by the National Catholic School of Social Work at**

Catholic University of America, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and two diocesan Catholic Charities. Another extraordinary Council sister, Kathy Bonner, was a presenter on this topic she has presented around the nation. Kudos to Kathy!

This year, we were one of the first sponsors and also an exhibitor at the Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America. July 1-4 in Orlando, FL. Inspired by *Evangelii Gaudium*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offered general sessions, workshops and inspiring worship opportunities including an outdoor Eucharistic Procession. Over 3,500 attendees, including many Council members, spent three days listening to information about where we are as a Church, what are the trends and how can we engage the younger generation in our role as missionary disciples. We will certainly be hearing more from the bishops on this theme.

- **Our commissions have engaged current topics including human trafficking, immigration, homelessness, respite for caregivers, membership**

development, and domestic violence. Spiritual resources include a retreat on mercy, rosary decades on the dignity of women and the introduction of the vocation purse club to assist women who want to enter religious life but are saddled with debt. For this first year of this project, \$21,000 was forwarded to the National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations that will provide one year of payments for 8 women entering religious life.

- We have developed a plan to begin affiliates at Catholic high schools and on Catholic college campuses. These groups would connect with NCCW through an on campus sponsor who would create opportunities for charitable works. We have one paid high school affiliate, St. Catherine of Siena Girls Academy in Michigan.**
- If you were not at convention last year, you missed the dramatic unveiling of a new logo for NCCW with a silhouette of Mary and baby Jesus, a fitting tribute to our patroness.**
- We offered the opportunity to honor the women in your life with a remembrance at the Masses offered**

at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC on Mother's Day. We have maintained a close connection with the Basilica where we donated Mary's Garden built in 2000 through the donations of thousands of women across the nation, the Associates of NCCW and the Diocese of Orlando. This will hopefully remain an annual event which benefitted the Basilica and NCCW. Past President Maggie Gray has represented NCCW on the Basilica Board of Directors for many years. Thank you, Maggie.

- Financially, NCCW is stable, out of debt and has money in the bank. I am surprised that I am still asked that question which is old news. Please spread the good news and make sure members know that we have every intention of being around for a long time, 97 years and counting down to 100.**
- We need you, presidents of all affiliate levels, to make sure that the dues are included in your budget and you forward the dues notice to your treasurer. We would be most grateful if you would also include the \$100 donation for annual giving in**

the budget. We ask all of you, if you are not already, to consider being an individual member of NCCW. We are a non-profit organization of Catholic women, established by the United States bishops officially in 1920 but, if you have read our history, know we were working long before then with the bishops' war relief activities. We are leaders in our parishes, deaneries/vicariates, arch/dioceses, and provinces. We are partners in the USCCB Catholic Social Ministry Gathering and many other Catholic organizations working as God has asked – love your neighbor.

I am proud to be an individual supporting member of NCCW and I ask all of you to consider making that commitment because that is who we are – women proud to be Catholic!

- Yesterday, you were introduced to our committed staff of Catholic women. We could not operate the organization without their work to maintain the membership lists, keep the resources in stock, mail orders, update the website, create the monthly e-newsletter which is a critical source of information, collaborate with FAITH Catholic to produce the**

quarterly magazine, represent NCCW at various meetings, respond to members requests and many other things including working on all phases of this convention which would not happen without their work. These are our employees who we pay to work for NCCW.

- In addition to the gatherings mentioned, I have been invited to speak at 16 conventions around the country, from Wyoming to South Carolina and attended the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations' North America Region meeting in Canada as well as the Catholic Women's League of Canada's Annual Convention last year. As president, I was an official observer at two General Assemblies and one Plenary Assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Catholic TV in Boston has shown taped interviews and I was twice a participant on the EWTN Morning Glory radio show. All this is to say, as president I appreciated the opportunity to speak about you and the work you do all across America.**
- This is a special time to make new friends, take new ideas back home, participate in beautiful liturgies**

and witness the changing of the guard so to speak – the installation of new Province Directors, a new secretary, a new President-Elect and a new President. I leave office knowing that our future is bright. We have dedicated, knowledgeable, faithful Catholic women who will take on new leadership roles. I will still serve on the executive committee and Board of Directors as the Immediate Past President so I am just moving over a few chairs on the dais. We have the happy circumstance that our incoming president-elect and president have served the last two years on the executive committee with other years of board experience so that bodes well for consistency in planning and implementation.

- In conclusion, I thank you for your prayers, notes, invitations to speak, requests for convention program letters, but especially for the privilege to represent all you wonderful women as the president. Please continue to pray for me as I always pray for you.**
- You are the National Council of Catholic Women and what you do matters.**

- **So to paraphrase: Go out and make all Catholic women members!**
- **May God continue to bless you and yours. Our Lady of Good Counsel, pray for us.**