

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
CATHOLIC WOMEN



The President's Pen

NCCW's Monthly Newsletter

January 2026

From the President

STARTING THE NEW YEAR WITH RESOLVE.

January invites us to reflect on fresh starts. We make resolutions with good intentions—some realistic, some ambitious, and some that quietly fade by February. In fact, the second Friday in January is known as “Quitters Day” because so many people have given up on their resolutions by then. Yet the New Year also offers something more profound than a checklist: an invitation to renew our commitment to living the Gospel more intentionally throughout the year.

As NCCW members, one resolution we can all share is to be pro-life advocates in the many ordinary ways God places before us. A consistent life ethic calls us to uphold the dignity of every human person—from the unborn to the elderly, from those at the margins to those sitting beside us in the pew. For some, this may mean advocating publicly or engaging in legislative efforts. For others, it may be offering compassionate support to a young mother, praying faithfully for a culture of life, or speaking with charity in difficult conversations.

Scripture reminds us, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). Pro-life work is not one-size-fits-all, and that is good news. This year, may we resolve not to do everything, but to do something—faithfully, joyfully, and together. This is a resolution that will last long beyond this Friday.

Yours in Christ,

Amy Kennedy

From the Chair of Spiritual Advisors

STANDING AT THE DOOR OF THE NEW YEAR

Dear Sisters in Christ,

As a new year opens before us, I find myself thinking less about resolutions and more about thresholds. A threshold is not a finish line—it’s a place of choosing, of attentiveness, of trust. You, the women of the National Council of Catholic Women, know something about thresholds. You live there every day: between prayer and action, tradition and renewal, quiet faithfulness, and courageous witness. The Church and the world are constantly changing, but what has always sustained them is what you practice so well—showing up with faith, compassion, and resolve, even when the way forward is not entirely clear.

This year will ask many things of us, but above all it will ask for presence: the steady, grace-filled presence of women who believe that God is still at work in ordinary lives and unlikely places. Your leadership, service, and prayer are not small things; they are leaven in the dough of the Church. As you step into this new year, may you do so with confidence—not in yourselves alone, but in the God who has already gone before you, who stands beside you now, and who will meet you in all that is yet to come.

We begin this new year not with noise or fireworks in the Church, but with a feast—the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. At the very start of the calendar year, the Church places before us a woman who pondered, trusted, and carried hope into the world. Mary does not begin the story with certainty about how everything will unfold; she begins with faith. She reminds us that God’s greatest work so often begins quietly, within willing hearts, and unfolds one faithful step at a time.

As women of the NCCW, this Marian posture—listening, courage, and trust—shapes the way you serve the Church and the world.

As we step into this new year, may we do so with Mary's attentiveness and with hope renewed. In that spirit, I leave you with these words from Maya Angelou, which feel especially fitting at the dawn of a new beginning:

*"Lift up your eyes upon
this day breaking for you.*

*Give birth again
to the dream."*

— Maya Angelou, *"On the Pulse of Morning"*

Wishing you all a happy and blessed New Year!

Peace, love, and prayers,

Fr. Tom Washburn

National Spiritual Advisor

From the President-Elect

President-elect's News:

Happy New Year! The New Year is the perfect time to make resolutions.

Here are some suggestions for resolutions:

- invite a new lady to attend a CCW meeting.
- share a resource from the nccw.org website at a CCW meeting.
- suggest and select a prayer from the nccw.org website to use as an opening or closing prayer for a CCW meeting.
- make plans to attend the NCCW Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan!

Ladies, the convention excitement is growing as details are being finalized for the speakers and work is being done to perfect the convention schedule which will offer education and hands-on learning opportunities for all attendees. Grand Rapids is a city of beauty, culture, and history. The tours being planned will give attendees the opportunity to experience this firsthand.

Looking for some adventure?

This could be your opportunity! Applications are still being accepted for a Host Council to host the 2027 NCCW Convention! The Convention Host Application form can be found on the NCCW convention website, and the nccw.org website: Members Only Resources page; under the Policies and Procedure section; Policies of the NCCW (2021). Councils are encouraged to read these policies pg. 12-15, listing the duties of the Local Volunteer

Coordinator and Host Council. These policies will help familiarize your diocesan council and/or Province in learning what is involved with hosting a convention. Any questions or concerns will be clarified by the NCCW President. _____

Please join the January 2026 *Council Chat*

Topic: *Sharing the “Gifts of Council”*

Monday, January 12th at 6 p.m. CT

The National Council of Catholic Women provides its members with a beautiful array of gifts. These gifts can be found in the many resources specifically developed for Council members. Valuable resources that are best shared with others. Please consider joining this *Council Chat* and taking a journey around and through the nccw.org website! Come and discover all the many gifts just waiting for you! An email and Zoom link will be sent prior to the January 12, 2026, *Council Chat*.

MEMBERSHIP SECTION

Answer to the December 2025 Membership question:

What should one have for Thanksgiving? One should have an **attitude of gratitude!**

New Membership Question:

Women of Council are women of prayer and action!

How many prayer opportunities are available on the nccw.org website? _____

(make sure you consider Rosary Reflections; Praying the Rosary with NCCW; NCCW Prayers; Prayer Services; Retreats; and more.

Wishing all of you good health and happiness this New Year!

Jane Schiszik, NCCW President-elect

From the Commissions and Committees



Spirituality Commission

Happy New Year! To start our new year off right, I wanted to share this prayer that we prayed on the December Rosary Call, and I urge you all to try to put the Rosary Call on your schedule for at least one month in 2026.

God of Love,

You are with us in every transition and change.

As we enter into this new era with excitement and even some anxiety, we recall your deep compassion, presence, and abounding love.

We thank you for the gifts, talents, and skills with which you have blessed us.

We thank you for the experiences that have brought us to this moment.

We thank you for the work of others that gives breadth and depth to our own work. Be with us as we move forward, rejoicing with you and supporting one another. We ask this in your Holy Name. Amen.

Amelia Sweeney, Spirituality Commission Chair

LEADERSHIP

Leadership Commission

Mary's Gentle Yes

Mary's gentle "Yes" invites us to begin the year in quiet trust and faithful surrender. Her openness to God's will teaches us, as Servant Leaders, to listen with our hearts and respond with courage rooted in prayer. As we reflect on January's Pro-Life theme, we are reminded that life is a sacred gift entrusted to our care. Pro-Life is lived through everyday holiness - praying for open hearts, accompanying those who are struggling, nurturing

families, and honoring the dignity of every person. NCCW encourages women by fostering spiritual growth, offering faith-filled formation, and witnessing Christ's love through service. Through Mary's example, we learn that even the gentlest yes can transform lives. United in faith, we inspire women to lead with compassion, humility, and unwavering hope.

Blessings for the New Year,

By Nancy L Bachicha, NCCW Leadership Commission Team



Resolutions Committee

We want to remind all our members that when considering a possible resolution:

First Stop and review the NCCW 25th Anniversary Resolution Book, which features Resolutions from 2000-2024. (This book can be found for downloading under the members-only resources on www.nccw.org). There may already be a resolution for the exact concern you are considering submitting a resolution for, saving you time and effort. If there is, and you have a second submission idea that has not been addressed, you can move on to that one.

If you have questions on how to submit the form, please contact our Resolutions Committee Chairs:

Laurie Ulseth: laurieccw@gmail.com

Tammy Farr: tammyccwfarr@gmail.com



Nominating Committee

Nominations for Treasurer have been extended through January 15, 2026. Please see the NCCW website for more information.



Legislative Advocacy Committee

Although public support for the death penalty is at a [five-decade low](#), 47 executions were carried out in the U.S. in 2025 – an all-time high in over a decade. This national increase was largely due to a sharp rise in Florida, which accounted for 40% of all executions after carrying out 19 death sentences. The Catechism of the Catholic Church ([no. 2267](#)) calls us to work towards the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. [Sign up](#) for emails from the Catholic Mobilizing Network in order to actively advocate for an end to the use of the death penalty.

By Ingrid Delgado, Legislative Advocacy Co-Chair



Education Committee

GOLDEN ROSE AWARD

The Golden Rose Award recognizes outstanding young high school girls for their Spirituality, Leadership, and Service. If your diocese already has this, you should soon send out information to the parishes.

If your diocese does not have this program, consider it. NCCW has a great resource available. Log in, go to Members Only Resources, scroll down to Awards, and Golden Rose Award Information and Application.

This is a wonderful way to recognize our young ladies and introduce them to the Council of Catholic Women. Remember, they are our future.

Have a Blessed New Year,

By Carol Brennan, Education Committee Co-Chair



Our Lady of Good Counsel Award Committee

Our Lady of Good Counsel Award (“OLGC”) Committee is very excited about reading the candidates' applications for the OLGC Award for 2026. It is never too early to begin planning who you would like to nominate and to gather all of the necessary information. All of us have many giving and dedicated ladies, both young and old, in our Councils.

You will find the OLGC Applications Packet 2026 on the NCCW website under Members Only Resources at the bottom of the page, listed under “Award Programs.”

By OLGC Chair Jeanne Audiss



Leadership, Development & Training (LTD)

Another year has come to an end. 2025 ended with bad weather, freezing temperatures, and tariffs that affected the costs of food and supplies. We need to think more about

praying to both Jesus and His Blessed Mother. In the National Council of Catholic Women, our patroness is Our Lady of Good Counsel.

We ask Our Lady of Good Counsel to intercede for us in prayer as members of NCCW. As members, when we pray together, we can achieve great things, as a group of women or as a few women. We must ask for it in prayer as a group. It is said if you ask for it through prayer, it will be done.

As a member of the Leadership, Training and Development Team, we look forward to meeting with our sisters to train them to have the best councils, to answer questions that they might have about how they can be the best councils, and to show them how they can have the best Councils in the United States.

God Bless us all.

By Judy Maurer, LTD Team Member

News from our Associated Organizations



Religious Alliance Against Pornography (RAAP)

Human Trafficking Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Trafficking Survivors Relief Act, H.R. 4323.

Commonly called “criminal record relief” so that human trafficking survivors can restore their lives. Obtaining housing, employment, custody of children, and many other essential functions of daily life.

The bill requires the court to grant a motion to vacate a conviction or expunge an arrest when a survivor can prove by “clear and convincing evidence” that they were a victim of human trafficking.

The U.S. Senate must pass this bill for it to move to the President for signature.

Karen Painter,

NCCW Religious Alliance Against Pornography (RAAP) Representative