

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
CATHOLIC  WOMEN



**The President's Pen**

**NCCW's Monthly Newsletter**

**December 2025**

**From the President**

**"... the thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices ..." - *O Holy Night***

A local radio station started with an all-Christmas format in early October. I understand I may be a traditionalist – I am a post-Thanksgiving only Christmas music person – but it was startling to hear Christmas music *that* early. When I pass by that station, I'll hear a snippet of a song, and it will stay with me for the day. I wound up humming *Rocking Around the Christmas Tree* while setting out our Halloween decorations. A couple of weeks ago, I was flipping past the station when *O Holy Night* was mid-song. Since it is my favorite carol, I made an exception to my rule and stayed tuned for the remainder of the song. The phrase I quote above has stayed with me ever since.

The concept of hope can feel desperate, inspiring, or comforting depending on one's situation. Thrilling is not the word I would have chosen to describe hope, but after meditating and praying on "the thrill of hope," it fits so well. Excitement, joy, and delight are all synonyms of thrill. As we close out the Year of Hope, may we all look forward to 2026 with the thrill of hope.

"The weary world rejoices" has resonated with me as we enter the holiday season. The cultural holiday expectations of parties, gifts, and cards, coupled with looming year-end tasks, can make for a season of busyness and distraction rather than the quiet contemplation Advent invites us to experience. How many of us wind up quite weary as Christmas Day approaches? We may not be able to eliminate all the demands of the season, but we can slow down, be intentional, and be fully present whenever possible. It will be in those precious quiet(er) times that we can leave the wearying parts of the season behind of focus on the cause for our rejoicing: the birth of Christ.

Most of you should have received the latest issue of *Catholic Woman Magazine*. May you find quiet time in the coming weeks to read the excellent content in the issue, and may it be a source of hope and inspiration for you.

Wishing you a blessed Advent and Christmastide, I remain yours in Christ,

*Amy Kennedy*

### **From the Chair of Spiritual Advisors**

#### ***HOLY READINESS***

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Advent has always been one of the most beautifully countercultural seasons of the Church year. While the world rushes, we wait. While the world pushes for more noise, we lean into silence. While the world demands instant gratification, we turn again to the patient hope of God. This year, as those of you who joined us on the Zoom meeting a few weeks ago know, I invite us to enter Advent with a spirit of Holy Readiness—a readiness not born of frantic preparation, but of deep, prayerful expectation.

"*Holy Readiness*" is the attitude of the heart that stands alert to God's presence and open to God's will. It is the readiness of Mary, who listened to the angel and responded with a simple and world-changing "*Let it be done to me according to your word.*" It is the readiness of John the Baptist, who cried out in the wilderness not for attention or acclaim, but to prepare the way for the One who is coming. It is the readiness of Joseph, who, when faced with uncertainty and fear, chose to trust the voice of God rather than the noise of the world.

Holy Readiness does not mean we have everything perfectly organized, decorated, and wrapped. Rather, it means our hearts are awake. We are watching for Christ not just at the end of time, but in the ordinary moments of our days—in the face of the lonely widow, the struggling single mother, the child who needs encouragement, and the neighbor who feels forgotten.

Advent reminds us that God shows up in unexpected ways and at unexpected times. The Lord comes quietly, humbly, and often without fanfare. Holy Readiness means that we are willing to slow down enough to notice grace arriving in small moments and simple gestures. The world says, *Hurry up*. Our faith says, *Stay awake*.

As women of faith and leaders in the NCCW, you are called to foster this readiness in your homes, parishes, and communities. Let us model what it looks like to prepare room for Christ: through intentional prayer, acts of mercy, reconciliation, generosity, and joyful hope. Let us enter Advent not overwhelmed by lists and tasks, but strengthened by the certainty that *God is already near*.

My prayer for each of us is that this season forms in us hearts that are watchful, peaceful, and ready. May we welcome Jesus Christ not only on Christmas morning, but in every breath of our lives.

A blessed and holy Advent to you all. Come, Lord Jesus.

Peace, love, and prayers,

Fr. Tom Washburn

*National Spiritual Advisor*

## **From the President-Elect**

### **Introducing the NCCW Convention Planning Committee**

At the June 2025 NCCW Board Meeting, NCCW President Beth Mahoney proposed forming a Convention Planning Committee to assist the NCCW President-elect in planning upcoming NCCW Conventions. The Board was in favor of the proposal and the NCCW Convention Planning Committee was approved. Some of the members were selected from the 2023-2025 Board of Directors along with several Past NCCW Presidents. The Chair of the committee is the NCCW President-elect, and the committee members are Immediate Past NCCW President Beth Mahoney, Past NCCW Presidents Pat Voorhes and Jean Kelly, Province Directors Brenda Dolan, Heather Johnson, and Melissa Young – Spillers, Janet Regan Chair of the Grand Rapids CCW Host Council, and Blinda Baker, Province Director of the Province of Detroit. NCCW President Amy Kennedy shares her input and oversees the committee. This committee meets monthly via zoom and has been busy planning some of the details of the upcoming convention.



#### UPDATE ON THE 2026 NCCW CONVENTION: SITE VISIT NOV. 5 & 6, 2025

President Amy Kennedy, Val Jensen, Event Planner, Janet Regan, Chair of the CCW Host Council & Grand Rapids CCW President, and President-elect Jane Schiszik had a productive site visit of the Amway Grand Plaza and DeVos Convention Center. We were also joined by Brandy Martin, Director of Convention Services. A logistic plan has been developed to accommodate meeting spaces needed for the convention registration, registrants, exhibitors, NCCW staff, silent auction items, commission displays, the meditation room, and rooms for province dinners. The Amway Grand Plaza is a very welcoming, beautiful, historic facility. The DeVos Convention Center has more than ample space for all our convention meeting needs.

#### MEMBERSHIP SECTION

One way to increase your organization's membership: try extending a personal invitation. to a meeting or special gathering!

#### New question:

What should one have for Thanksgiving?

An \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_!

*Answer to the November Membership question:*

Council women are

**Women of prayer and women of action!**

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Dear Council Sisters,

Thank you to all of you that participated in the November *Council Chat* “Preparing Our Hearts for Advent.” Ladies, your attendance via zoom was awesome!

**Just a gentle reminder: there is not a *Council Chat* in December but mark your calendar stay for the next scheduled *Council Chat* on Monday, January 10, 2026. (Topic to be announced.)**

Keeping all of you in thought and prayer,

*Jane Schiszik*

#### **From the Commissions and Committees**



#### **Spirituality Commission**

During Advent, we prepare, we anticipate, and we wait. We also sometimes stress out, feel anxious or depressed, and miss loved ones who are either far away or no longer with us. We wonder what the new year will bring and hope it will be happier, healthier, maybe more prosperous. Instead of wondering, I challenge you to take a more proactive approach to Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the very essence of Hope for our world. Begin taking stock of all those gifts we enjoy as Christians. One way to do that is through a devotional journal or inspirational calendar. In keeping with my theme, there is one that I found titled *Giving Birth to Hope: a 31-day Devotional* by Yvonne Moore. (<https://www.walmart.com/ip/Giving-Birth-to-Hope-A-31-Day-Devotional-Paperback-9781942923749/5412825563>)

My prayer for all of you this Advent and Christmas is that you may experience the fullness of joy that comes only from God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amelia Sweeney, Spirituality Commission Chair

# Service Commission

## **Service Commission**

Your Service Commission is praying about and pondering ideas for a national service project. We will have a proposal soon. We have enjoyed reviewing the past 25 years of amazing Resolutions for ideas. If you have a Service Project suggestion that has worked well in your Council, please send it to us by emailing our Chair at [sharonannobrien6@gmail.com](mailto:sharonannobrien6@gmail.com) by December 10th at [sharonannobrien6@gmail.com](mailto:sharonannobrien6@gmail.com). Many thanks!

# LEADERSHIP

## **Leadership Commission**

### **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Service and Communication**

By: Alycia Laureti, Leadership Committee Member

As women of faith, we are called to use the gifts God gave us—wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These gifts shape how we serve and inspire others: wisdom helps us discern God’s will; understanding deepens compassion; counsel guides prudent decisions; fortitude strengthens integrity; knowledge roots us in truth; piety leads with humility.

These gifts strengthen our communication as leaders. By listening attentively, speaking clearly, and fostering open dialogue, we build trust and unity.

May every decision, conversation, and act of service reflect the Spirit’s presence and bear lasting fruit for the Kingdom of God.



# RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

## **Resolutions Committee**

Resolutions are the backbone of who we are and what we are about as Catholic Women in today's society. NCCW is our organization; we make a difference to all of those we serve, not just within our organization, but also those in our communities who are hurting in any way. Everyone has a choice and is encouraged to voice their opinion on what our programs should focus on for the coming year. Will you let us know what you want NCCW programs to focus on? Please start now to consider where you think our organization can go next year to best serve all of God's people.

If you are unsure of how to go about creating a resolution, please visit the NCCW website: [nccw.org/About Us/Protocols/Bylaws/Resolutions](http://nccw.org/About%20Us/Protocols/Bylaws/Resolutions), then scroll down to the bottom of the page, where you will find Past Resolutions already in place, as well as a form for submitting a new resolution. It is not nearly as difficult or scary as some might think. If you still have questions on how to submit the form, please contact our Resolutions Committee Chairs:

Laurie Ulseth: [laurieccw@gmail.com](mailto:laurieccw@gmail.com)

Tammy Farr: [tammyccwfarr@gmail.com](mailto:tammyccwfarr@gmail.com)



## **NOMINATIONS FOR TREASURER OPEN SOON!**

### **Nominating Committee**

#### **Saying “Yes” to Service**

**By:** Members of the Nominating Committee

The Women’s Council thrives when each woman shares her God-given gifts. As we enter a new year, please prayerfully consider how you might participate—through hospitality, prayer support, creativity, event planning, outreach, or simple administrative help. Every contribution enriches the council.

We also invite women to discern serving in a leadership role, especially as NCCW Treasurer, a vital position supporting transparency and good stewardship of the NCCW.

Maybe this is the year you join a committee... share a hidden talent... or say “yes” to leadership. Like the Blessed Mother, may our “yes” make a meaningful difference in our council.



### **Legislative Advocacy Committee**

#### **OUR FAITH CALLS US TO WITNESS**

By Sheila S. Hopkins, Legislative Advocacy Co-Chair

Across the United States are Catholic Conferences that advocate for issues of importance to the Catholic Church. Most ask the laity to be involved in these efforts and provide training and information to those who volunteer. In Florida, Catholic Days at the Capitol is sponsored by the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops. The training is critical as your message should be the points handed out. Follow the voting records of your designated representatives and write to thank them if they vote for the Church position. They will appreciate your effort and be open to meet with you again.



## **Education Committee**

By: Yvonne W. Pygatt, Committee Member

Greetings!

The Education Committee met on November 17, 2025. We will be meeting every third Monday thereafter. Our focus will be on sharing information with the Women of NCCW regarding the different aspects of **Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities, and the Golden Rose Award.**

Our goal is to provide education and information through sharing programs that promote **Spirituality, Leadership, and Service**, in addition to providing resources that you will be able to share with your CCW groups. Stay tuned, and we wish you a Happy and blessed Holiday Season!

## **Leadership, Development & Training (LTD)**

The Leadership Training and Development team (LTD) is ready to help you! We have a great number of programs available to your Councils. We will come to you with presentations and resources to assist your ladies in whatever topic you choose. We are ready, willing, and able! Contact us via email through the NCCW website.