

Prince Albert Diocesan Council
Lorraine Thibeault, Spiritual Development Chairperson Communiqué #12
November 1, 2020

“Let us all rejoice in the Lord, as we celebrate the feast day in honour of all the Saints, at whose festival the angels rejoice and praise the Son of God.” Entrance Antiphon for All Saints Mass, Sunday, November 1, 2020

In this communiqué, I will be talking about “the role of women in the church” which is one of the categories of responsibility for us as chairpersons of spiritual development.

We often consider the many roles that we, as women, take on in the church. With all our activities in our families and communities, we sometimes overwhelm ourselves by adding on too many roles within the church. Many blessings come about because of our many roles. I think that is one reason why we continue to do the many good works that we do.

There are many varied views on the role of women in the church and in the world. The feminist movement pointed out various inequalities in pay, in treatment of women and in access to jobs. Today, we don't hear as much about the inequalities, but, we know, that inequality still exists. We must continue to support each other in the League through prayer and respectful dialogue. We often have different views about the roles we hold, but we should always hold each other in respect and uphold the self-esteem of our sisters in the League and in community.

In the church, we know that women play active roles. Women serve their parishes and communities in a variety of ways: altar servers, sponsors at baptism and confirmation, equal partners in matrimony, members of pastoral councils and finance committees, lectors, sacristans, commentators, Eucharistic ministers, ushers, parish office workers, teachers of religious education, pastoral associates, canon lawyers, judges and chancellors. We are all called to the priesthood of Christ.

We know that women have played a variety of roles and the church has affected societal attitudes to women worldwide in significant ways. Women constitute the majority of members of consecrated life in the Catholic Church. Prominent women in the life of the church have included Old Testament figures, Jesus' mother Mary, and female disciples of Jesus of the Gospels. Motherhood is given an exalted status within the Catholic faith. Conversely, the role of Eve in the Garden of Eden and other biblical stories affected the development of a Western notion of woman as "temptress". This is not a role we want to have.

Influential individuals range from theologians, abbesses, monarchs, missionaries, mystics, martyrs, scientists, nurses, hospital administrators, educationalists

and religious sisters, many of whom have been canonized as Catholic saints. Catholic women have risen to international prominence through charitable mission works and social justice campaigns – as with hospitals pioneer St Marianne Cope and Mother Teresa who began by serving the dying destitute in India.

I encourage members to investigate the many women who have held special roles in church and community. We must also remember the humble women throughout the world who have served as role models for us: our mothers, sisters, friends, and our sisters in the League and in our parishes.

We have many examples of women throughout history who exemplify the various roles of women in the world and in the church. It would be wonderful to encourage your members to find out about the many female role models we have. This is not to discourage us from considering the many male role models we have.

Some prayer services are available on the National CWL website to help us in our consideration of the role of women in the church. Go to cwl.ca – View Resources – 700 Series:

- 719 – Meditation on Mary and the Transformation of the Church (calls us to live as people consecrated to God.)
- 732 – Strength of Women (encourages us to renew, nurture and share life)
- 738 – We Walk in the Footsteps of Mary (encourages us to share ours and other's joy, to make the common holy, and to accompany others on their journey)

Hopefully, you will find these resources helpful as you consider your role as a woman in the church.