

## WUCWO NORTH AMERICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

### WOMEN OF MERCY – UNITED WITH ONE HEART, ONE VOICE, ONE MISSION

Our WUCWO North American Regional Conference was held in Halifax, Nova Scotia August 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, preceeding the national convention of the Catholic Women's League of Canada. Over 750 delegates participated in the events. The opening ceremony included the flags of our region carried in by President General, Maria Giovanna Ruggieri, Vice-President General, Maribeth Stewart and North American Vice-President, Velma Harasen, while all joined in singing "Gather Us Together". Following a welcome from Velma, the presidents from our member organisations spoke briefly: Barbara Dowding, Catholic Women's League of Canada, Sheila Hopkins, National Council of Catholic Women of the United States and Marian Barczyk, President of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada. A message of greetings from Vertelle Kenion, Supreme Lady of the Knights of Peter Claver was read.

Maribeth Stewart then gave a most interesting and educational presentation on WUCWO's work on the international scene and her involvement at the United Nations.

Our featured speaker was President General, Maria Giovanna who gave us a very inspiring message, often referring to Pope Francis, and the challenges and opportunities presented to women.

Velma spoke on the WUCWO international project of providing funds to build a well in Senegal and providing a water distribution system for a school in one of the poorest areas in Argentina, putting action to a resolution passed in Fatima - that is the right to have access to clean drinking water. Delegates were invited to donate to the "Wishing Well", which collected over \$800.00, and more than \$1,500.00 was added following the Mass collection on Monday.

The banner made for the WUCWO General Assembly which was held in Nova Scotia in 1983 was proudly displayed by the artist, Yvette Muise. The message portrayed was relevant today!

The afternoon concluded with the Family and Youth prayer prepared for WUCWO members for the year 2016. Mass was celebrated at 7:00 p.m. in St. Mary's Basilica.

Monday morning opened with a prayer service led by Maribeth Stewart.

The keynote speaker was Sister John Mary of the Sisters of Life. She spoke of her vocation and her life of prayer and journeying with those who are experiencing an unwanted pregnancy or the effects of an abortion. Her theme dealt with being women of mercy and how we can be instruments of mercy, bringing love and joy to others. She referred to Mary at the Annunciation and Mary and Elizabeth at the Visitation. The audience then shared personal stories that changed their lives. The morning closed with celebration of the Eucharist.

The WUCWO closing luncheon featured speaker, Rita Janes. She provided an excellent overview on Pope Francis's encyclical Laudato Si. She spoke of our responsibility to care for the earth, our common home and the call from Pope Francis to have a change of heart.

Delegates were treated to a historic harbour cruise, to a succulent traditional lobster supper, only to conclude the activity-filled days with a gala banquet complete with entertainment by the "Men of the Deep"

The conference brought us together in prayer, dialogue, friendship, and fun! We came together as Women of Mercy - United with One Heart, One Voice, One Mission.