CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE
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CWL magazine

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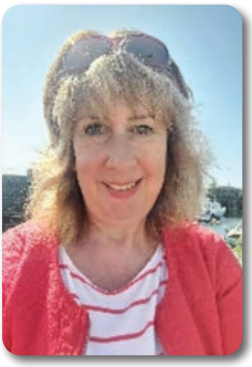
Winter 2024

Celebrating Ripon

A Message from the NATIONAL PRESIDENT



Well, what a wonderful day we had on our Summer Day in Ripon! It was so lovely to meet so many members and share time with you at our Wayside Shrine. Given the lack of suitable meeting spaces in Ripon and the distance of the shrine from a train station, the visit there was a logistical challenge, but the weather, the company and your patience made up for the 'cosy' space at the Community Rooms and the military style operation we had to employ to get everyone there and back. Jean, as ever, worked for hours to ensure that the day went smoothly and the memorial booklet she produced was outstanding. Next summer we will be going to Walsingham with accommodation reserved for those who would like to spend a weekend there. The dates to save in your diary are Friday 13th to Sunday 15th June 2025, with the option to attend on a daily basis if that suits you better.

Time waits for no man (or woman) and we will be starting the process to find a new National President soon. My term of office will be over at the next AGM in 2025, so it's time to think about who you would like to be your next president. The League is full of inspirational, capable ladies who might be willing to consider the role. I think most organisations suffer from a lack of people willing or able to take on roles other than their local commitment. Sometimes it's because people haven't got the time needed for a role due to other commitments, caring for a partner, their own health issues or grandparent duties, but it's often because people lack the confidence needed to step forward. I don't think there's a board or committee that I have been involved with where I haven't experienced 'imposter syndrome'. I've always had moments where I look around a room and wonder why I'm sitting around a table with others who I consider infinitely more capable than me, but the members have been kind and patient with me and they would be with you, should you take on the role. Please give some thought as to whether you could serve the League as National President and look out for more details about the election process.

We are also appealing for someone who can help the National Treasurer with monthly financial returns. Jeanette Collins indicated that she wanted to retire from the role at this year's AGM and I would like to thank her for her dedicated service helping Christine Burke, as well as her term as National Treasurer and National President. Jeanette managed to take on all these roles from her base in Jersey, so distance is no barrier!

Not only is distance no barrier to taking up a role in the CWL, but age is no barrier to membership! Huge congratulations to Ursula Robinson from Grays Section who celebrated her 100th birthday on 26th August! Thank you, Ursula, for all your years of membership so far.

Talking of age and membership, the most common concern you voice to me at meetings is the fact that 'we're all getting older' and that younger members don't want to join. The answer, I think, is to open new Sections and accept the fact that, like many organisations these days, there is an older age profile than we had some years ago. The sheer joy and camaraderie I witness on visits around the country can be replicated in parishes that haven't got a UCM Foundation or CWL Section as yet. Please ask parish priests in your locality if they would be willing to have a Section in their parish and let me know if you would like me to assist in setting the new group up.

Siobhan x ***National President***

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF CATHOLIC WOMEN

During this period of the Synod on Synodality, the NBCW has been discerning how we can better fit the changing needs of the Church in England and Wales. As an organisation established in 1938, our needs have changed significantly over the years, and the Synod has been a prompt from the Holy Spirit to explore our strategic vision. The NBCW has discerned that we must continue amplifying women's voices in our communities and restructure to focus on the synodal themes of Communion, Mission, and Participation.

COMMUNION

We have discerned that we want to create a new way for Catholic women in this country to network and be in Communion with one another. We believe that the Holy Spirit is calling us to walk with one another, listen to one another, and grow in unity. We want the NBCW to be a valuable conduit for ensuring women are heard and that this listening is part of a structured response to the Synod findings.

Recognising as the NBCW that we have much to do in the area of Communion, we have at our centre a call from Christ firstly to bring Catholic women together and to work to develop further collaboration with our Catholic men, clergy, and lay. We seek to do this by strengthening our networks within dioceses and with those currently disengaged or unengaged with the Church.

The National Board of Catholic Women has traditionally been founded to bring together different women's groups to work together for the common good. In our recent review, we have discerned that this membership needs to be broadened to enable women not in women's groups to be part of the organisation.

We are going to operate online primarily. We have a new website, and younger women are involved in its creation and this vision. It can be found here: www.nbcw.co.uk

PARTICIPATION

We seek to place formation as a main priority, recognising that formation is essential yet often needs to improve in practice. To support women in participating further in the Church community and as witnesses in the world, we are developing a programme of formation that offers bespoke development for women, harnessing their gifts and wisdom. We have many gifted women in this country who provide a gift of role models for young and older generations alike.

MISSION

We intend to continue to further our advocacy work in living Christ's mission. The NBCW does not stand for any one particular perspective but rather seeks to enable diverse women to be heard and to dialogue with one another and the world. We hold a particular mission to advocate for women affected by poverty, violence, and other social injustice and we continue to have a committee structure for this important work.

We believe bringing women together to share their experiences, provide role models, and consider how we might advocate for women is still very much needed in our society today. The good work needs to continue!

Amy Cameron ***President of the NBCW***

OUR WORK with PACT

The Challenges

The prison system has featured heavily in the news in recent months. It faces significant challenges and tough conditions that impact both inmates and staff. Overcrowding is a major issue, with many prisons operating above capacity, leading to cramped and unsanitary living conditions. This often results in increased tension, violence, and self-harm among prisoners with staff shortages compounding the problems by limiting the ability to provide adequate supervision, rehabilitation programs, and mental health support.

In trying to discern a way in which we could add value and support to those imprisoned or their families we identified two ways in which CWL could help; to offer spiritual comfort by making Cross in Pockets and to supply prisoners being released back into society, with nothing but the clothes on their back, with some useful items in a backpack.

So, why did we choose PACT?

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) is a charity that makes a big difference for prisoners and their families. It provides emotional support and practical help, from maintaining contact between prisoners and their loved ones to offering advice through helplines. They also run visitor centres at prisons where families can feel welcome and supported.

In terms of ongoing support, Pact help prisoners prepare for life after release by offering mentoring, employment support, and guidance on finding stable housing. By focusing on rehabilitation and keeping families connected, Pact plays a vital role in reducing reoffending and helping individuals build brighter futures.

What we have achieved so far

Well, needless to say, CWL members always rise to a challenge and the response from you all has been truly amazing! We asked you to embroider Cross in Pockets and you have made around 6000 so far. I think most of you by now appreciate my sheer ineptitude where arts and crafts are concerned and that I've only made one. It was so bad that Margaret von Speyr mounted it in a frame for me as a reminder... and probably as a hint not to attempt a second one! On the other hand, we have Sections who have produced hundreds. I'm truly grateful to all of you who have taken part in the project so far, but more importantly, you have the thanks of every single person who has received one.

You have also been packing PACT backpacks containing useful items to keep people leaving prison going until they can get back on their feet. It's difficult to give an accurate figure as to how many have been produced as they're not distributed through a single point of contact, but we think we are heading for 1000 packs. They are hugely appreciated by the recipients as many leave prison with no possessions at all.

I thought you would like to read the following message from a member of the PACT team about a consignment of PACT Packs that had recently been distributed:

> *"Most of them went to HMP Birmingham and HMP Hewell which are 2 of the biggest and the 2 largest remand prisons in the West Midlands. Hewell in particular were so grateful to be able to have a backpack as it's quite a remote prison and a lot of them needed to travel quite a way to get home so carrying your worldly goods in a clear plastic bag tied with a cable tie from the prison just immediately identified them as a released prisoner. We've had men released with very few items, and have been so thankful for those bags, particularly the last batch that had a bottle of water and an energy bar as we've had men released absolutely starving as they've been waiting around all day. The notebook with*

the kind words in have just been amazing- the difference it makes to someone not used to hearing many kind words is immeasurable.

The clean, new underwear and socks, simple as it sounds, has such a positive effect on their mental health at a really stressful time for them. Given that some of these prisoners are currently going out and being given tents as suitable accommodation, to have some clean clothes and a bag is a huge thing."

I'm really grateful to all the members who have not been able to assemble packs for all sorts of reasons but have sent financial donations to HQ. Your kindness has allowed us to pay for the items needed for each pack. Thank you!

Where we go from here

As well as an ongoing need for Crosses in Pockets, we have had an urgent request for more PACT Packs. As you'll be aware, so many prisoners are going to be released earlier than anticipated and PACT would love to have more packs at the ready to cope with demand. Male and female packs are needed and one unit has a mother and baby unit. If you can help and assemble some packs, please contact Jean so we can coordinate onward distribution.

A new initiative will be launched at this year's AGM. We would like you to write prayers, poems, stories and inspirational words to be included in a booklet for those struggling in the prison system. We often see our older age profile as a negative, but we have such great experience of life, of problem-solving, of supporting others through times of hardship and we can inspire those serving a sentence to keep going and turn their lives around.

Siobhan x ***National President***

Carlo Acutis

When I finally retired from teaching (at the second attempt) I decided to join a class to improve my Italian. My teacher told me when she heard we were going to Assisi at the beginning of May that we should look out for the church of Santa Maria Maggiore where she was married. Having spent most of the week visiting Assisi including the basilicas of St Francis and Saint Clare we were looking forward to going into a quieter church not far from the main tourist spots. As we approached we were joined by many groups of young people and as we sat in the first chapel there were more young people playing the guitar. It was only then that we realised that this was the church where the, at the time, "blessed" Carlo Acutis is buried. It would have been his birthday when we were there. Carlo will be the first "millennial" Saint. He was born in London in May 1991 and died of leukaemia in October 2006 in Monza Italy. He is clearly a great role model to young people. He was a website designer with a deep love for the Eucharist who managed to get his parents, who were not devout, to church every day. He also stood up for the less fortunate, for example other young people who were bullied. He is due to be canonised either at the end of this year or next year, the Jubilee year with a focus on youth.

Catharine Dean ***Trustee***

SECTION FOCUS
SOUTHBOURNE

In May, 5 Southbourne members took part in a Walsingham pilgrimage organised by Walsingham Dorset Association. We stayed at the Anglican Shrine and food and accommodation far exceeded our expectations. We had Mass every day - usually at noon - in the Basilica of Our Lady and were deeply moved by the small Slipper Chapel, a National Shrine, where a model based on the medieval statue of Our Lady of Walsingham is enthroned. With great humility, we walked the holy mile from the village to the Basilica. Our Chairman was entrusted with the cross and strong men carried Our Lady's statue on their shoulders. We visited St Julian's Shrine in Norwich where this anchoress and spiritual counsellor lived in a tiny cell; her writings are full of hope. Other highlights was the ceremony of sprinkling of holy water from the original well in the Anglican church, an artistic feast for the eyes, and the evening candlelit procession in the gardens. Our pilgrimage was an enjoyable experience; we made friends with our fellow pilgrims and are enthusiastic to return.

Also in May, a coach trip took 6 members to Arundel Cathedral to see the wonderful 90 feet long Carpet of Flowers; this is created by volunteers all in one day, covering the whole central aisle, a truly incredible achievement. This celebration has been repeated for over 140 years for the Feast of Corpus Christi. A truly beautiful day.

June saw 3 members walk about 7 miles along the coast from Southbourne Crossroads to Sandbanks, stopping regularly to say a decade of the rosary and quench our thirst. We then got an open deck bus to Bournemouth where we stopped at the Sacred Heart church to give thanks at Our Lady of Fatima's chapel and then a bus home. We raised £324 and had a great time albeit one blister; one can only imagine the hardship and dedication of pilgrims in mediaeval times.

Then, on a day in July, after both morning Masses, we held our Annual Crafts and Coffee morning to raise money for Pact. Crafts such as handmade flowers and jewellery were sold, a raffle took place and cakes and refreshments were served. We raised £476 and were extremely pleased with the result.

Portsmouth Branch

BRANCH FOCUS
BRENTWOOD

It was lovely to see so many ladies from across Brentwood diocese at our **Annual Assembly Day** on Saturday 13th July. The ladies enjoyed getting to know each other better with some ice-breaker games, listened to an interesting and inspiring talk from Brother Julian from the Anglican Franciscan community in Plaistow and had a fabulous lunch prepared by our wonderful Secretary, Kathy. Thank you all for your company and for your generosity which saw £120 go to Brother Julian's Helping Hands programme which helps local people with shelter, food, friendship and whatever else they can. If anyone wants further details about this charity, please let us know.

Brentwood members at Assembly Day.

This is a word wall created from the lovely feedback from the ladies at Brentwood when they were asked what they got out of being a CWL member. The bigger the word, the more often it was mentioned. What a supportive and friendly bunch you are!

We also had a successful Branch outing to commemorate St Margaret Clitherow's Feast Day. Branch President, Sue led a group of 29 members in a local history walk around Poplar in east London which explored the places connected to Call the Midwife and the community illustrated in the well-known memoirs of Jennifer Worth. This was followed by lunch and then a guided tour around the galleries of London Museum Docklands.

Happy 100th Birthday, Ursula

But a great event for us all, without a doubt, was the celebration of a member's 100th Birthday! Grays Section and Brentwood Branch member Ursula Robinson celebrated her centenary with a party for family and friends in the parish hall of St Thomas of Canterbury church in Grays on August Bank holiday weekend.

Theresa Alessandro, formerly at Pact, has created a lovely new podcast called **All Kinds of Catholic.** In each weekly episode, Theresa chats to an 'ordinary' Catholic about their life and their faith; what helps them in their faith, times they might have felt a bit lost, ups and downs in life.

Each conversation is recorded over zoom – no video - and edited afterwards by Theresa to remove all the 'ums' and 'ers'. You can listen to and follow the podcast in all the usual podcast places, and also here https://kindsofcatholic.buzzsprout.com/ You can also find and follow the dedicated Facebook and Twitter accounts: **@KindsofCatholic**.

Theresa warmly invites CWL ladies to consider being a guest on the pod. All you would have to do is join Theresa on zoom for an hour, at a mutually convenient time. You'll have a good chat. Theresa will help smooth any tricky bits. Then the episode will go out into the world - and it might encourage new members of CWL along the way too! Guests sometimes feel a bit apprehensive beforehand but everyone says how much they have enjoyed the process afterwards so don't be shy.

If you listen to some of the episodes already released, you'll see that guests use just their first name. You can even use a pseudonym instead if you prefer. Theresa has a GDPR policy and a simple Guest Agreement so you can be sure she'll look after you and your data properly.

Email Theresa to find out more here theresa@kindsofcatholic.co.uk

CWL's own, Elizabeth Upsher, is about to join Theresa on a podcast. Be sure to listen out!

3 wonderful women who have served the League

Ursula Robinson, Grays Section Brentwood Branch

I have been in the CWL for over 60 years and supported the Section parish in innumerable ways including helping to set up CWL HOUSING at St Anne's Stifford Clays. I am still extremely active in the parish and only gave up mowing the lawn at St Peter's Stifford Clays last year! I was so delighted to receive a beautiful bouquet from CWL and donations from well-wishers to my favourite charity, HCPT which offers pilgrimage holidays to Lourdes in the south of France, for disabled and disadvantaged people from around the UK. Donations reached over £4000!

Branch President, Sue adds 'This will more than pay for two children to go to Lourdes and speaks volumes for the esteem and love that everyone has for this amazing lady.'

Hello, my name is ***Emmi Long*** and I belong to ***Gosport Section, Portsmouth Branch.*** I travelled to England from Switzerland in 1956 as an au pair, met my future husband and, after our marriage, settled in Gosport. Sixty-four years ago (1960), after much persuasion by Merville Pigeon, Fr Tom Foley (PP) 'reluctantly allowed' the Gosport CWL Section to form. I was asked if I would be interested in joining. Having been involved in youthwork in my Swiss parish, I was keen but had a three-year-old and five-month-old twins! Knowing I missed my friends, my husband agreed to my joining as long as I didn't join any committees. Reflecting on that time I know joining the CWL helped me to make friends and belong. Over the years I became more involved (had more children) and joined the Committee: becoming Treasurer (more years than as an ordinary member) and was Chair for our 25th Anniversary.

I enjoyed travelling to National Council: my first was Southampton (the ladies were very elegant, wearing posh hats!). I went to Eastbourne; Stockport (very early start, waiting in Birmingham... arriving at supper time!); Scarborough (bus broke down); Brighton; Plymouth; York (visiting the Shambles); Exeter (University) and Buxton.

We still do the same work – raising money for Charities, helping our Parishes, making Friends.

Maureen McCarthy, CWL Adefyield Section, Westminster Branch

The first time I heard of the Catholic Women's League was in 1983 when our newly appointed Parish Priest (Fr Higgins) who had previously been at Westminster Cathedral asked a group of us ladies if we would like to start a CWL Section, and although most of us had never heard of CWL we decided to give it a try and so we held our first meeting with about 12 ladies. Fr Higgins came along to explain what the organisation was all about. We then formed a committee where I became Chairperson, Pam Moore was Secretary and Shirley Williams the Treasurer. Pam and myself are still active members. We held our 40th Anniversary last year and celebrated with afternoon tea and a beautifully iced cake. We looked at many old photos with past members who had travelled to join us. We also reminisced about the times we went to the AGMs (then called National Council), our trips to the seaside in the church minibus and of course our enjoyment of the AGMs where there were often very interesting speakers and discussions - such good times were had.

We always remember those who are no longer with us and the great friendship we all had with one another. Over the years, we have put on many functions to fundraise for our CWL charities, with dinner and dances, soup kitchens, cake and craft stalls and cooked lunches each year for our senior citizens, all with great success. One of the most memorable recent functions we did was a musical extravaganza in 2012 with Sister Act. Some of us even made our own nun outfits. We were lucky enough to have access to professional music backing with chapel bells and great singing lead by one of our members, named Chloe. She was a real Whoopi Goldberg, she was from South Africa and her mother and five sisters all had beautiful voices. The following year we performed Mamma Mia with many people singing and dancing in the aisles. We would not be able to do any of our functions without the skills of Anne Hudson who cooks marvellous three course dinners and makes great cakes. We are also very lucky to have Pam Moore as our Chair and Margaret Henley as our Treasurer.

We currently have 15 members and 3 more ladies have just joined us. We are unable to put on large functions as we used to, (all of us getting that much older) but still do our best to support the League and Charities. Long may we continue.

The National Pilgrimage to the CWL Shrine at Ripon on Saturday 22nd June

Veronica Cross of Dunmow Section, Brentwood Branch begins our memories of a fantastic day. Some members were staying at The Bar Convent in York and what a wonderful place it is. After a major refurbishing programme all the lovely rooms now have en suites. On Saturday morning we had a fantastic breakfast and winged our way to the meeting point of York Station and the nearby War Memorial Gardens to await the arrival of all pilgrims to catch our coaches to Ripon. We soon arrived at the Ripon Community Centre and were offered teas and coffees and the first group went off to the Ripon Shrine, after they had had the very good lunch that was provided for us all. The travelling arrangements went like clockwork. The Shrine looked amazing, and it was obvious that a lot of hard work had been put into the surrounding area making it a perfect and welcoming spot. We were of course lucky with the weather and was able to appreciate it at its best.

The service began with the National President's Welcome and continued with a very apt and meaningful Prayer Service for the occasion. We then returned to The Community Centre for refreshments and more chat. It was a very good idea to have our Pilgrimage to Ripon and hopefully members will appreciate more the significance and importance of it within the history of our CWL. The amount of hard work that had gone into the arrangement of this Pilgrimage was beyond the call of duty; it was run like a military campaign to me. Thank you to everyone involved in this great summer event for our League.

What a lovely day at the Ripon Shrine and such lovely weather as well. The Lord was certainly watching over us, and the organisers in particular. You must be so glad all went well, an excellent piece of planning.

Many, many thanks to all concerned with arranging the pilgrimage to Ripon Shrine on Saturday 22nd June. Clearly, much forethought and detailed organisation was required and it all paid off. It was a memorable day, particularly distinctive in its focus. Thank you.

Thanks to you all for a lovely day on 22nd June, the Shrine looked really beautiful, the weather was amazing (you planned that well), packed lunch delicious and for me it was nice to get to know members better and some I hadn't spoken to before. My mother loved it as well and we've made it back to Richmond with some lovely memories.

On behalf of the former members of CWL Leeds I wish to express our thanks for such a warm welcome at the recent get together in Ripon. Thank you all so much and all good wishes for the future of the CWL.

What a weekend we have had. Absolutely memorable. Thank you to everyone who made the day work so well. The Shrine looked magnificent! It was lovely to see quite a few members at the Oratory in York for Sunday Mass and great to bump into other members roaming the streets of Margaret Clitherow's home town during the day.

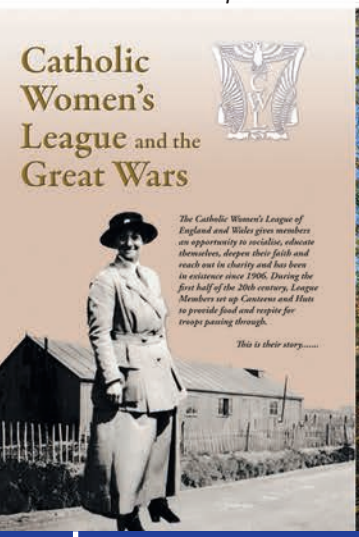
A truly memorable day for those members who travelled to Ripon. The organisation of the day was excellent, only to be superseded by the tremendous warmth and spirituality we all experienced at being by that crucifix at the Shrine with so many members.

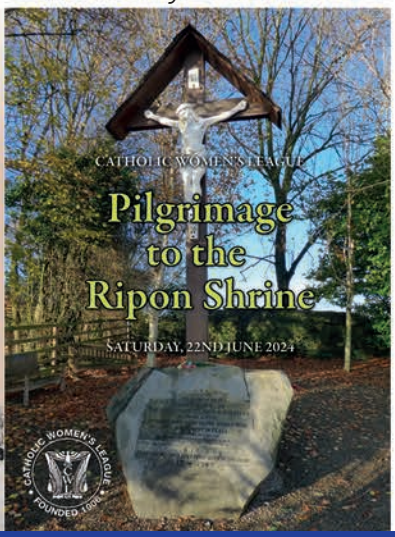
Thank you for the very informative History Booklet we all received at Ripon. Aren't we all proud of those members who worked so selflessly in the name of the League during the Two Great Wars. Are there any more of the booklets available – I think every member ought to have one!

A heart-felt thankyou to all who came to Ripon and for making endless cups of tea with limited hot water! Thank you too for preparing such a meaningful prayer service for us, Margaret and Anne. We were blessed with great company and glorious weather. It was really lovely to be at the Ripon Wayside Shrine with so many of our members and, hopefully, everyone managed to get lunch and a cuppa in the end.

I would like to say on behalf of myself and my two companions, how much we enjoyed the CWL outing to Ripon. The organisation was incredible when one thinks of the number of women you had to organise. We felt that everything ran to "plan". Coaches arrived, people were transported, tea and coffee appeared. People were fed. Coaches appeared again etc. I hope everyone caught their trains and arrived home safely though exhausted. We all did. It did not stop there. The booklets which were so informative have been given to friends and family to read. The information about Ripon and the CWL has been spread further. We thank you for all that you and others did for the day. It was appreciated.

Digital copies of both these booklets here are available from the National Secretary





It certainly was a lovely day and an honour to pray in remembrance of our brave and selfless sisters who practised Charity, Work and Loyalty in desperate times. And, yes, the cups of tea and coffee were in high demand!

May I, on behalf of the Cottingham Section, thank you so much for arranging such a wonderful day members spent at the Wayside Shrine near Ripon. First of all, by arranging it so that many members could visit the shrine calmly and prayerfully and secondly, that we were able to all meet together socially and to rest in the Ripon Community Centre for the day. The organising of a large event such as this is so time consuming and we all appreciate the hard work you all put in to get it to run so smoothly. Thank you and God bless

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

Greenford Section, Westminster Branch

Our Lady of the Visitation Church is right next to the primary school of the same name. I have been called over to church from my job in the school a few times to administer first aid to parishioners while they waited for paramedics. A couple of times, I have felt the need to take our school defibrillator with me. I have never had to use it, thank God. But the thought kept occurring to me that what if the defibrillator really was needed when the school was closed or in the evenings, weekends and school holidays? So, at one of our Branch gatherings, we talked about charities we would like to raise money for, I suggested raising money for a defibrillator for church. So, on 14th April 2024, Greenford Section took over the Old Church Hall, next to the church. After two of the masses, we served tea and coffee and had a cake sale including beautifully decorated cakes by one of our members. We requested donations and also had a very successful table sale. Bits and pieces our members had gathered from their homes over a couple of weeks proved very popular. Bags, books, toys, brick-a-brac etc. With one sale we have raised £400 towards our £600 target for a church defibrillator!We are very proud of this achievement as we have only been running as a Section since just before Christmas.

Watford Section, Westminster Branch

Wendy Casey making sandwiches and Mercedes Knight making soup for the SVP Welcome Space which operates in their parish once a week. With the help of many CWL members lunch is available with home-made soup, sandwiches, cakes, biscuits, fruits and hot and cold drinks and everyone is welcome. If they can afford a donation it goes in the box, if they are unable, then it is free of course. We have a very friendly rapport with our customers and are often thanked for the kind sincere attitude we show them. We have been supplying lunches each Monday, except Bank Holidays for way over a year now. It is so worthwhile and we all thoroughly enjoy ourselves.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

St Bartholomew's Section, Westminster Branch

A short while before the pandemic struck, we at St Bartholomew's church welcomed our new priest Fr Francis Antwi-Darkwah into our parish. It was such a difficult time as of course we were soon all told to 'stay at home' and the churches were shut. But Fr Francis made it his goal to get to know people. He willingly took on the role of CWL chaplain with enthusiasm. As well as being our spiritual advisor, saying Mass, joining in our social events and making home visits when requested, he has become a good friend.

It is with sadness that we let you know our chairman Maureen Anderson passed away in the Hospice of St Francis, Berkhamsted on 26th May 2024. Maureen was a cheerful, caring and devout person, an inspiration to everyone she met, especially in the last couple of years during her illness. She loved life, enjoyed playing golf and bridge, and was often to be seen raising a glass and sharing a joke. She was a lovely lady and will be deeply missed.

You may well remember Maureen during her years in the League, wearing many hats – as Westminster Branch President, during which time she played a central role in organizing the CWL centenary held in Brighton in 2006. What a wonderful event that was! She was Region 5 Representative overseeing 4 Branches; served on the National Executive and was a Trustee attending all the executive meetings in a friendly and efficient way. Maureen was also a very committed member of the Relief & Refugee Committee, taking part in monthly meetings considering applications from relevant agencies and distributing grants. Caring for the poor and homeless was a cause close to her heart.

Maureen - ***You lead St Bart's Section for many years with energy and kindness and we thank you. May you rest in peace.***

We at St Bart's are a smaller Section nowadays, continuing to support parish organisations, events and activities as we can. We enjoy a close bond of friendship, sharing our joys and sorrows, caring for each other, especially those with health and mobility issues.

And to finish - as Maureen would often say – May God bless us all.

Cockfosters Section, Westminster Branch

This year's event was a great success. Apart from saying a huge thank you to everyone who has helped the Section throughout the year, the intention was to raise the profile of the Section and hopefully recruit new members. An assortment of delicious buffet food was provided with glasses of Pimms, soft drinks and, of course plenty of tea & coffee. Approximately 50 people attended from various groups who help the Section in one way or another. It was a lovely surprise to see Vee Comparini, President of CWL Westminster Branch too. We also had an excellent entertainer – James Le Bec who sang to us for an hour or so.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

Welwyn Garden City Section, Westminster Branch

Here are a few pictures of our latest venture in WGC. A luxury raffle for funds towards our charities and £452 was raised! An amazing amount in this time of hardships. We raised a further £78 helping out at our local Community Summer Fayre which involved people with special needs. It was a really wonderful afternoon. We have had a busy summer with a sponsored walk, twice around Stanborough Lakes where just a few of us ventured out in the showers and, of course, the reward of a delicious tea. It was a typical English summer afternoon. To finish off our season of activities we held our Strawberry Tea, in the Sacristy, as the weather wasn't kind to us then either! But the occasion was really lovely and our National President, Siobhan, joined us.

Adeyfield Section, Westminster Branch

Well done all for a great effort! On the weekend of 11/12 May Adeyfield held a plant sale and raised over £100 for our charities & the weather was very kind to us! In September we held an Afternoon Tea with Just A Capella and raised funds for Friends of the Holy Land.

Lymington Section, Portsmouth Branch

This is a photo of Eileen Rayner presenting this plaque to the children of Our Lady of Mercy and St Joseph, our local school. We arranged for an Art competition to take place and put the names of the KS1 and KS2 children on it and gave the 2 winners a book token each. We had an open-air Mass but the wind was so blustery that Fr David kept losing his mass papers. It was a very joyful Mass and the children sang loudly and happily. Due to Data protection we cannot send pictures of the winners.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

Petts Wood Section, Southwark Branch

Petts Wood Section held a very successful plant sale to raise funds for Pact and other charities. They provided 18 backpacks for Pact as well as a donation to HQ for the project and also for Aid to the Church in Need. They also hosted a Teddy Bears' Picnic and were very lucky with the weather for their summer event. They had lots more adults than children but the children had a great time and the adults were able to chat to each other. Our Parish Priest, Fr David came along to join in the picnic as did Father Bryan and there was lots of music with Fr Bryan's wife on guitar and members Brigid and Ann on keyboard and accordion. The children were all able to request their favourite songs and have as many percussion instruments as they wanted. Father Bryan played the Tom and Jerry music for the special guest appearance of Tom and Jerry. The Section considered themselves very fortunate because their parish Confirmands held a retiring collection after their Confirmation Mass for Pact. Some of them also held a cake sale for extra funds and 10 came along on a Saturday morning and made up the backpacks. The Year 12 students at Bishop Challoner School also fundraised and packed 21 backpacks. All of this was a brilliant effort and an activity which the youngsters enjoyed. Furthermore, it gave them the opportunity to learn about the CWL and Pact and reflect on the wider implications of a prison sentence, not only for the prisoner, but also for the children and family.

Winchester Section, Portsmouth Branch

Our cherry blossom tree was planted in the autumn of 2022 at St Gregory's Chuch, Alresford. It was planned to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee. Unfortunately by the time we had chosen a tree and decided where to plant it, the Queen had died. The tree now seemed to mark her jubilee and her death. Part of a legacy left to us by a member contributed to the cost of the tree and its plaque. Her details are on the back of the plaque. Our tree has grown and changed with the seasons and is a memorial to two women who greatly influenced the Winchester Section of the CWL.

Isle of Wight Section, Portsmouth Branch

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

Westcliff Section, Brentwood Branch

Easter 2024 saw one of our members delivering the Section's knitted baby hats and cardigans for the neo-natal unit at Southend Hospital. Final knitting count was 66 hats, 17 cardigans, 4 blankets, 7 pairs socks and bonding squares. On 31st May 2024 Section members and World Day of Prayer Southend Committee members met up for lunch at a local restaurant - this is becoming a regular event. Members also supported Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and Elizabeth and John Upsher attended the 40th anniversary mass held in Billericay on 14th June. An ABBA tribute night on 12th July was enjoyed by the members who attended Brentwood Branch Assembly Day - 12th July was a busy day! 19th July Morning coffee and pastries in a members garden in aid of Havens Hospices was followed by serving refreshments outside church for Confirmation. We have found that arranging social outings as well as working together at church is a great way to keep us together and feel connected. We are busy organising the cream teas for our parish 155th anniversary (2 hampers provided for the raffle from the generosity of members) - always on hand to serve teas and coffees and help with flowers and fundraising as well as supporting each other through very difficult times with prayers and love.

Small Heath Section, Birmingham Branch

Caroline at Ripon

It was lovely that a very new member of just a couple of months to the Section has joined in CWL activities with gusto. We welcome Caroline who writes: *My name is Caroline Onyango and I live in Erdington, Birmingham. I recently joined CWL after searching online and reaching out. I got a response from Jean and she directed me to the closest section at Small Heath. My encounter with the beautiful ladies who were present put me at ease, they were friendly and exuded with warmth. In the couple of months since joining I have attended Birmingham Branch's Pilgrimage to Evesham, and the National Ripon Pilgrimage. The combination of the historical charm and heart-warming interactions with the ladies made my trips a truly enriching experience. Their knowledge of the church's history, their passion for the church and welcoming spirit created a sense of community and belonging. The pastries, sandwiches, cakes and tea at Ripon really was the cherry on top. I have been fed body and soul. God bless you for all the sacrifices you make and keeping Christ Alive.*

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

Cottingham Section, Middlesbrough Branch

Members of Cottingham Section, Middlesbrough Branch held their annual three-day Retreat at the Briery Retreat Centre in Ilkley, Yorkshire. Fr David White, Branch Spiritual Advisor who has led our retreats for many years, again led this inspirational retreat. The Section also held their Afternoon Tea in aid of CWL National Project 'Pact'. 32 members and parishioners attended, and we made £344. We held the WUCWO Prayer Service earlier and welcomed a new member.

Devon and Dorset Sections

Devon and Dorset's pilgrimage to Our Lady of Buckfast at Buckfast Abbey in Devon was a happy day for all the members who gathered there in rather damp weather. The usual procession around the grounds of the Abbey was replaced by a procession inside the church this year. This made it somehow cosier and when we emerged from mass celebrated by the Abbot David Charlesworth it was dry enough to take photos with all the banners on display for other visitors to see.

Roehampton Section, Southwark Branch

Chairman, Miriam writes about their work in promoting the League around town: *It was great to see many of you at the car boot sale which made the excellent sum of £416, which was possible through Merci getting things ready in the middle of the night and cooks producing an excellent lunch! Orleen has sent the excellent new handbill with future car boot sale dates to Roehampton Voice and, I hope, some are in prominent places like the Library, shops and meeting places round Roehampton. I have sent an article with an excellent photo of our stall to Roehampton Voice and another article welcoming Fr. Gordon with the photo of the offering to him at the end of the induction ceremony. So, I hope St Joseph's Church will benefit from the interest and all your hard work.*

Jersey East Section, Portsmouth Branch

In order to support the National Project (Pact), the Section has been learning more about the Prison Service on Jersey and would like to share this article with you https://edition.pagesuite.com/infinity/article_popover_share.aspx?guid=29f5750f-ba8e-4732-b553-20977fd7860f&share=true&appcode=JEEVPO The prisoner Governor's recent visit to our meeting was indeed very inspiring.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

Wolverhampton Section, Birmingham Branch

At their Annual Strawberry Tea Meeting, Wolverhampton Section said a huge 'Thankyou' to Margaret Pennington who retired as Chairman after many years steering at the helm. Margaret was also about to celebrate her 65th birthday, so it was a very sincere double celebration for a well-loved and such a hard-working member.

Margaret shared her love of poetry with fellow Section Members with an acrostic poem she wrote, explaining everything we all know about CWL –

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE *An Acrostic Poem by Margaret Pennington*

Charity, Work and Loyalty, our wonderful motto.
Always willing to help when asked.
Trusting in the Lord in all things.
Having a cheerful attitude, encouraging fun and laughter.
Organisation skills discovered and appreciated.
Loving and encompassing all members as a family.
In the presence of like-minded women.
Constantly in our thoughts and prayers.

Welcoming all ladies, including those from our wider community.
Our Lady, our help in times of need.
Margaret Clitherow, our Patroness and Guide.
Enthusiasm and boundless energy from all.
Never creating negativity, understanding different values.
Spiritual prayers, hymns, Masses and Rosaries.

Loving Our Lord and God at all times.
Enjoying all of God's blessings.
Aid to the poor, homeless and the needy.
Giving what we can to help our charities.
Understanding of people's needs.
Educating and uniting women, in their service to God, the Church, and the Family.

Plympton Section, Devon Branch

Chairman, Sally writes - *Thank you for the newsletter. I feel we are very lucky to have Siobhan as our National President, I feel it has infused us with new enthusiasm with the various activities we can link into, especially all the zooms we are offered which gives us an opportunity to see other members from across the country.*

I thought you may like to know that we have just had our last meeting before the holidays at Edgcumbe Court, the apartments at the Nazareth House village, where Joan Screech and her husband live. Joan suggested we come down for Mass, and have the meeting after, followed by pre ordered sandwiches and soup in the conservatory in the garden of the apartments. It is in a stunning position, by the sea, and was a lovely change from our church annexe.

Thank you to Joan. We have just booked up for our Christmas Meal, can never be too early! and will extend an invitation to Ivybridge Section, the only other Section near us in Plymouth. Several members have joined us over the last few years.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

Northampton Branch held an anniversary celebration on 25th May 2024 at St Andrew's Shared Church in Cippenham, Slough. We were very pleased that both Bishop David and Siobhan were able to join us. Bishop David celebrated Mass together with Father Anthony and Father Marek from Our Lady of Peace Church. Afterwards, we had a lovely afternoon tea. Over 40 members attended. It was a wonderful afternoon. Everyone pitched in to help with the organisation and clearing up as CWL members always do!

Swindon Direct Section, Clifton Diocese

Swindon Section recently completed 12 more backpacks for women prisoners. The only prison for women in our diocese is Eastwood Park, north of Bristol and near Wootton Under Edge. We were able to meet up with Emily Dix, Pact manager at Eastwood Park who was very keen to have the backpacks.

Emily is a really impressive young woman with 5 years previous experience in the Probation Service. These were the first bags they had received and she was delighted. There are about 350 women at Eastwood Park and the main concern is the sudden release of extra prisoners that the new government plans in September. This will see about 50 women released from Eastwood Park by then. As it usually takes 12 weeks to prepare for release through setting up probation appointments and maybe housing and mental health support they foresee problems. The Section are also planning a delivery of 12 men's bags to Erlestoke.

Towela and Alison (Hope and Love!) with Julieann Hiscocks

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SECTIONS

Beckenham Section, Southwark Branch

Member, Gloria Brown, was encouraged to submit a poem for a competition inviting contributions on the joys of ageing! Read on:

'Joy in Ageing'? Hard to find,
Very little comes to mind.
Aches and pains and creaking knee
These for sure 'Abide with Me.'
Middle age boasts some delight
Time enough to put things right.
Lovers lost and battles won,
'Summer's lease' too quickly gone.
Now Shakespeare's seventh age of man
Tells us every sense grows 'san';
While Housman sighed for springs long spent,
And mourned the land of lost content.
Tormented Hopkins looked within
And saw a world despoiled by sin.
But then rejoiced, when spring arrived
That green miraculous growth survived.
Now Browning said 'grow old with me'
You'll find 'the best is yet to be.'
But when his dear wife thought upon it
She sighed, and penned another sonnet.
Wise Blake it was who wrote the line:
That 'joy and woe are woven fine'.
And both may come, as friend or foe,
And that is all we need to know!

Gloria Brown

Gloria adds - With apologies to the poets whose names I have used and from whom I have quoted. Like Montaigne, 'I have gathered a posy of other men's flowers, and only the thread that binds them is my own.'

But there is more news – The competition was organised by the charity, Embracing Age and received a 'highly commended' by the charity, one prominent member of which is Pamela Rhodes, of Songs of Praise fame. Gloria has been informed that the awards will be given on "Silver Sunday", first Sunday in October. Gloria herself has been asked to provide a photo of herself and to record the poem. Will her work make national TV?

Southwark Branch

Aline Cook tells us about the Branch's WUCWO Mass on May 14th. The Branch knew it would be a bit bold to continue with the WUCWO Mass when the original date had become impossible and, indeed, most of our invited guests from other Branches found it impossible to change their own commitments, except Veronica Cross, our CWL WUCWO Liaison. So, a special thank you to Veronica! Other things went wrong for that day but in the end, the happy few who made it did not regret it one bit: Father Joseph Bailham had to go away but left us in the very capable hands of two of his fellow Dominican priests (Father Andrew and Father Louis) who concelebrated the WUCWO Mass for us at the Lady's Chapel. We were even given a special treat: a quick tour of the Radio Maria studio, guided by the daughter of a former member of Richmond Section.

RADIO MARIA ENGLAND

AND NOW FOR SOME HISTORY OF OUR SECTION IN RICHMOND - 200 YEARS

Towards the end of the 18th century, the penal laws against Catholics were no longer enforced. By 1778, Catholics could purchase land. The Church could not yet build places of worship but lay people could.

In 1793, a Richmond tallow chandler rented a room as a chapel. Then, a rich landowner, Miss Elizabeth Doughty, had a real chapel built in a back street, a simple building in the contemporary Georgian style. Miss Doughty named it after her own patron saint (Saint Elizabeth of Portugal) provided it with its own fund for maintenance, and then donated it to the Church. The year was 1824.

At the end of the 18th century, there had been about fifty local Catholics in Richmond. Numbers increased during the 19th century through Anglican conversions and Irish immigration. In 1863 the parish priest estimated his congregation at 300, growing to 500 by 1898.

This led to the enlargement of St Elizabeth's church in 1903 with a beautiful sanctuary, side-chapels, new furniture to allow for processions and a copper-domed steeple, all in the ultramontane spirit of the time.

New catholic churches were also built in the neighbourhood : St Margaret of Scotland (1936), Our Lady Queen of Peace (1953), while St Elizabeth's itself developed a new parish at Ham in the 1950's.

The original Richmond Catholics were mostly poor: craftsmen, servants, nurses, manual workers. Many were illiterate, worked in shifts. Two exceptions were members of the French royal family: the Compte de Paris who came in 1848, and his daughter, Queen Amelia of Portugal who settled in Richmond after the 1911 revolution in Portugal.

While today's Richmond population is often referred to as "well-healed", it has also become remarkably international. It also remains a rather more mobile congregation than priests forever trying to build a strong community spirit would like.

Richmond has had 18 catholic parish priests since 1793, and many more assistant priests. Some stayed for a few months; one remained for 45 years. They have been French, Irish, English, half-German, Nigerian, cradle-Catholics or converts. They lived through wars and peace, marked now and again with the odd disaster: the Big Storm of 1987; a rather sad episode testing the loyalties of many in 2011, the COVID lockdown in 2020 ...

One major upheaval was in the 1960's, when the "dialogue Mass" was introduced. Suddenly one was expected to respond aloud in Latin, then English. The priest was now facing the congregation. Parishioners read the lessons, wrote and read bidding prayers. At St Elizabeth's, Canon Davys saw us through this unsettling period. Canon Davys was also the priest who invited the CWL to open a section at St Elizabeth's as soon as he arrived in 1961. We are still here today!

Today, Father Stephen, steers us through our rather anti-Christian age to ensure that young and old develop into enthusiastic believers. And wouldn't it be lovely if St Elizabeth's could at last produce a priest from among its own children?

CWL Trustees recently agreed to help fund this Ukranian Pilgrimage

Fr. Andriy Tsyaputa, Parish Priest at the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Manchester, writes:

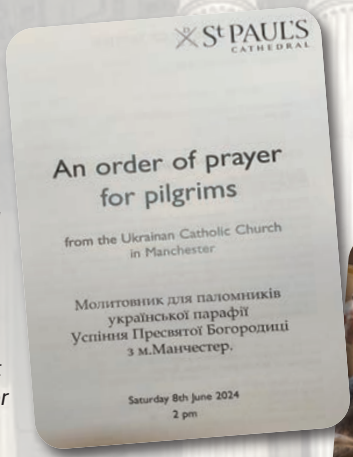
On 8th June 2024 we had a pilgrimage to the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in London (Duke St, London) as on that date there was a Congress of Ukrainian children from the entire United Kingdom. I really wanted to give the opportunity for our Ukrainian children in Manchester to meet others. Since our community consists mostly of refugees, we had no money for this trip and I knew that my parishioners are currently going through a difficult period in their lives.

So, I wrote to the Catholic Women's League kindly requesting some financial help. It really was going to be a special day because there was also the opportunity to pray in St. Paul's Cathedral. With the Blessing of the Most Reverend Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, at the parish of The Dormition of the Holy Mary Mother of God Ukrainian Catholic Church in Manchester, the youth of our community initiated a prayer request to all peoples and residents of Great Britain. The prayer initiative of the youth community is called: 'Children of Ukraine are asking for prayer'. As part of this action, the young people of our parish tell everyone who wants to hear about the war on the territory of their fatherland. They tell of the thousands of deaths on the battlefields and the deaths of civilians of Ukraine. The prayers are for the children who are innocently

dying because of the war and strife in Ukraine, and for all children in parts of the world where there is now a war.

We held the first such prayer with the clergy of the Church of England in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. It was such a special occasion and I thank you so sincerely for helping my parish community and her Ukrainian children take this first step. Thank you very much again for your help. I assure you that we do pray for you at Ukrainian Catholic Church in Manchester.

God sees effort and sincere intention in everyone's heart and will reward you with great power of grace.



NB. permission has been granted by the Diocese to share photographs

CWL BENCH at National Memorial Arboretum

On 14th July, 2009 a bench was dedicated at the National Memorial Arboretum to commemorate the work carried out by the Ladies of the Catholic Women's League during both world wars. Bishop David McGough, Auxiliary Bishop in Birmingham blessed the bench and also celebrated the first ever Sacrifice of the Holy Mass in the Millennium Chapel there. Our National President, Doreen Pooley, was present together with members of the National Executive Committee and the Chairman and Secretary of the Services Committee. The Bench is located on Millennium Avenue in front of the RAF Benevolent Fund Memorial and opposite the Forever Remembered Poppy Garden, close to the Visitor Centre.

Those members who have visited the National Memorial Arboretum will remember seeing the bench and with all members will be glad that the Trustees still maintain it.

Recently, National Treasurer, Christine received this:

Good afternoon, Christine

Please find attached the promised photos showing the newly restored bench.

I hope you are able to visit soon and see it for yourself.

Kind regards

Lindsey Smith, Support Services Administrator

Our Lady of Walsingham raised to the rank of FEAST

The Vatican has granted permission for Our Lady of Walsingham to be celebrated as a new Feast in the dioceses of England, starting this year on 24 September.

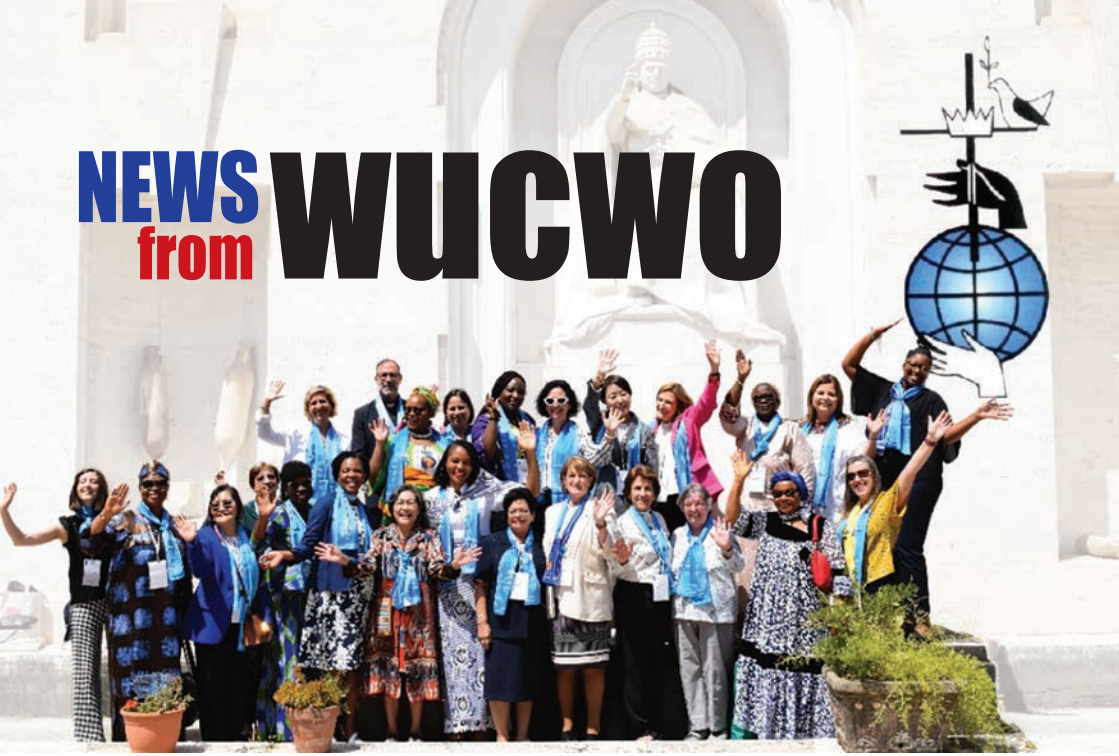
Cardinal Arthur Roche, Prefect of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, wrote to Cardinal Vincent Nichols, president of the Bishops' Conference, in response to his request last year that the Obligatory Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Walsingham be raised to the rank of Feast:

"Given the historic importance of this shrine for the Church in England and Wales, dating back just over one thousand years, and given the growing devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham to which you attest, the Dicastery has decided that, by way of exception, your request may be granted."

The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham was established in 1061, according to the text of the Pynson Ballad, when devout noblewoman Richeldis de Faverches asked in prayer for inspiration so that she could carry out a special work in honour of Our Lady.

The Pynson Ballad says that Our Lady appeared to Richeldis and showed her in spirit the House of the Annunciation where the Angel greeted Mary in Nazareth, and asked her to build a replica in Walsingham as a perpetual memorial of the Annunciation.

NEWS from WUCWO



Hello, members. Veronica here giving you an update on what has been happening at WUCWO:

On 29th May I attended a WUCWO webinar 'The Results of Listening and Networking' - this was from a zoom a few weeks previously attended by 670 people from 78 countries on the conclusions of the *'Conversations In The Spirit WUCWO School of Synodality'*. We were in breakout rooms of say 5 people - listening and debating with one another. Subjects included eradicating violence and discrimination against women throughout the world. The World Women's Observatory (WWO) of WUCWO is the only Catholic Church's global observatory focusing on women's voices.

I thought I would bring to your attention something on the WUCWO website where it mentions: *Margaret Fletcher holds a significant place in the history of WUCWO. Founder of the Catholic Women's League which has a long and proud history. She was born in Oxford in 1862. She played a crucial part in shaping the Organization of WUCWO where she served as President General from 1912 - 1913. Her leadership and commitment helped make the voice of Catholic Women heard and her legacy continues to inspire women worldwide.*

Thought this was a very special and apt mention of our illustrious leader.

Full reports of all WUCWO webinars are on their website. There isn't yet any indication as to where the next General assembly will be - early days yet I would imagine.

The end of May saw WUCWO's 2024 In Person Board Meeting, in Rome to which WUCWO's International Representatives and the newly appointed members to the Board from *Caritas Internationalis* and the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) were also invited.

The days were very active, listening and commenting on reports, learning together about WUCWO and working in Committees, Working Groups and Regions, in order to elaborate the proposals to be voted by the Board and included in **2024-2027 WUCWO's Action Plan.**

Veronica Cross, CWL
- WUCWO Liaison

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