

## **July 2014 Communiqué - Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council President Elect / Organization Standing Committee**

*The aim of this communiqué is to assist members in using the interview by Barb Dowding from Salt and Light for personal reflection or discussion in their councils. It can be accessed from the national website or on youtube: <<http://youtu.be/6pLLzDUCbp0>> The interview is about 12 minutes long and starts at: 8:02 and ends at 19:48.*

On June 27, 2014, Salt And Light TV shared an interview that Alicia Ambrosio had with our national President-Elect Barb Dowding on a series on the subject of women in the church. In her work life and her work in the League what Barb has done has been a reflection of Mary saying 'yes' to what she had been asked and hoping for the best. "When someone asks you to do something, it is because they believe that you can do it. I try hard to honour that request."

Barb's CWL journey began at the parish level, doing little jobs here and there. She had already been the council secretary for a number of years. Someone recognised gifts that Barb had and asked her to be president. In her journey through the different levels Barb has noticed that people don't step up easily. She has always said, "If you think I can do it, I'll try. I've had really good mentors, women who push and affirm. I think all women need to be pushed and affirmed and we need to do the same for others. My journey in the CWL happened because women believed in me"

Working at the next levels of the diocese and the province "wasn't overwhelming. It wasn't cumbersome because I wanted to do it. It is important that I have a wonderful supportive husband. (I couldn't do it without him.) He knows it means a lot to me and it's good for him to see what I have done. that I know I couldn't do it without him. He knows that the League means a lot to me. It is sometimes a challenge to find time for family. We need to realise that they have their own lives as well. It is important to have your own life and your own interests that feed you. One of the key elements about the CWL for me is the spiritual journey and we always go back to that; that's the root of the CWL. That is why you can do it, you're not really doing it for yourself, and you're getting so much more back."

Pope Francis has encouraged women to share pastoral duties in the church. He has said that he wants to see a greater space for women to have a more incisive and capillary role. Barb says that if a woman finds herself as the 'token woman' on a committee she can make it an opportunity to show what a woman can do. We do not need to push our way but take advantage of these times when we can step up and step out. It's our role to take the opportunity to show what women can do.

There are different challenges for a woman who simultaneously wants to share her church using her gifts and her talents but also having a family. Barb spoke about how she finds a balance and finds time. "One can find time for anything if you really want to. When I started attending meetings, it was because I liked the friendship and the spirituality and so I made the time to go. It wasn't until quite a few years later that I took presidency. I had been secretary for quite a few years

because I always like to take notes. To be the president was a bigger commitment and I said yes even though I was busy and working. I believed in it.”

Barb shared advice for women who feel like they have gifts and talents that they would like to share with their parish or diocesan community, who want to serve. “I think these women should explore all the options in their parish. They should get to know other women of their similar age and background. If they don’t already belong to the Catholic Women’s League of Canada, they should think about joining. We need women to realise that we have so much to offer, we have unlimited potential. Sometimes using the gifts God has given us is a little hard and even scary. Women are missing out on what we would get if we tap into and use our gifts. We also need to recognise the gifts in others help them to blossom. We blossom when we take chances.

What can we take from this interview? What questions can we ask ourselves?

1. When someone asks you to do something, it is because they believe that you can do it. I try hard to honour that request.

*Do YOU believe this for yourself? Do you realise what gifts you have and that others recognize these gifts in you, perhaps better than you do yourself?*

2. “If you think I can do it, I’ll try. I’ve had really good mentors, women who push and affirm. I think all women need to be pushed and affirmed and we need to do the same for others. My journey in the CWL happened because women believed in me.”

*To enable the growth of the League and of my sisters, do I encourage and affirm other women? Who has believed in you? Who do you nurture because you believe in them?*

3. “It is important that I have a wonderful supportive husband. (I know I couldn’t do it without him.) He knows it means a lot to me and that’s good for him to see what I have done.”

*Have you thanked your husband for his support? Recognise the specific forms of support he gives you. Does he realise that you think you could not do this work without his support?*

4. “It is important to have your own life and your own interests that feed you. One of the key elements about the CWL for me is the spiritual journey and we always go back to that; that’s the root of the CWL. That is why you can do it, you’re not really doing it for yourself, and you’re getting so much more back.”

*Do you ‘guilt’ yourself for your activities with the League? Do you realise why you do your activities with the League. What have you gained from the League?*

5. “We do not need to push our way but take advantage of these times when we can step up and step out. It’s our role to take the opportunity to show what women can do.”

*What committees or boards outside of the League are you on? What do you bring to these leadership opportunities that show the gift of what women can do? //*