

Message from Our Co-Presidents

Sue Koch and Ellen Martin

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Let Us Build a Strong Foundation

With the theme of Women on Fire for the Lord, our 62nd annual convention in June marked the beginning of our co-presidency. Nearly 140 women attended the convention, including 29 first-timers, at All Saints Church in Berlin. celebrate our 62nd Annual Convention.

We had two powerful speakers. Marianne Skrobiak, a charismatic leader from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, gave the keynote and presented at a shashop. Mary-Kate Martin, a young woman originally from a Jefferson Vicariate parish, told about feeling the call of Mother Teresa to go abroad and help out the less fortunate. She began an orphanage in Swaziland especially for young wayward girls affected by rape, poverty, and prostitution. Her use of video with the girls speaking about their past and dreams for the future met with many a tearful eye among the convention attendees.

Later in June, our MDCCW hosted a reception following the ordination of Fr. Joseph Baker at St. Maria Goretti in Madison. About 300 attended the wonderful event. Thank you to all who helped and donated money and food.

In early September, 11 of us from MDCCW traveled by bus with women from the dioceses of La Crosse and Superior to participate in the 96th convention of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) in Indianapolis. Over 600 women from all over the country met for four days and were inspired by wonderful speakers who focused on the theme of "Catholic Women: Instruments of Mercy." We were provided with information to take back to our parishes and vicariates from the three commissions. Each day, we had Mass which filled our souls and bodies with the words of Jesus.

The NCCW has worked very hard these past years to get out of debt. The good news is that it is now out of debt. But, the only way NCCW will be able to continue in the right direction is by bringing back membership. Therefore, it has lowered the cost of membership to \$50.

One thing that was discussed at the national convention was something we already knew. You parish ladies and your ladies groups are the foundation of the structure that is the National Council of Catholic Women. The other levels of the structure — vicariate, diocese, national, and international — cannot thrive or survive without you at the most basic level. We need your commitment, your spirit of saying "yes," and your tooting your horn about the benefits of your council to other churchgoing women in your parish community. Whether you call yourself altar society, ladies sodality, or Catholic women's club, you are all part of the important job of supporting, empowering, and educating your fellow Catholic women from 18 years to 108 years in spirituality, leadership, and service. Whether at the parish, vicariate, or diocesan level, if there is not a strong backbone of participation by many women, it will not matter if you strive to have the best programs, conventions, and meetings. Let us build a strong foundation to positively influence all the other levels of the organization.

God does not call the qualified; He qualifies those He calls. Just think about the people Jesus chose to carry out His work. His apostles were not the most educated, eloquent speakers from the right families. They were unpolished fishermen. Look at Peter. He was certainly a bit rough around the edges. He rashly cut off a man's ear, and then actually started swearing and lying that he didn't know Jesus. But Jesus chose him to be our first pope. Don't worry that you don't know what to do or say. Jesus can do big things with each of us if we just say yes as the apostles did.

Good news is that Jefferson Vicariate with the help of Rock/Green Vicariate will be hosting the 63rd Annual MDCCW Convention. So, mark your calendars for June 14 to be in Ft. Atkinson at St. Joseph Parish.

Sue Koch and Ellen Martin
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