

CONVENTION 2018

August 29-September 1, 2018 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The 98th Annual Convention of the National Council of Catholic Women was held at the Wyndham Grand Downtown in Pittsburgh, PA. 500 women and 42 priests gathered together to celebrate the theme, *NCCW Reflecting God's Joy: Missionary Disciples -Mission Possible!*

Prior to the official Convention kick-off, an optional comprehensive tour of Pittsburgh churches was offered. The following evening, an optional riverboat tour of Pittsburgh Highlights showcased the beauty of this city where three rivers meet right in front of our hotel.

A Welcome Liturgy was held with the Chair of the Spiritual Advisors, Rev. Richard Dawson, as the principal celebrant. Following Mass, the Board of Directors met and heard reports concerning our finances, convention updates, resources, and office updates.

Wednesday evening we had a very special treat courtesy of Carmel Communications, a Silver Sponsor of Convention. They provided a free pre-release screening of a major movie, *Indivisible*.

Thursday morning, prior to the official start of Convention, our President made a statement regarding the scandal facing our Church that was well received. We then officially opened our Convention 2018 with a prayer and began a new tradition. Prior to the presentation and salute to the flag of the United States of America, our Immediate Past President, Sheila Hopkins, carried in a flag of the NCCW and heard a new Hymn to Our Lady of Good Counsel, patroness of the NCCW, based on our Mission Statement. The flag was designed and the hymn composed by our present president and the hymn was sung beautifully by our staff member, Bernadette Corso. The Opening General Session also included introductions, letters of welcome, and personal greetings from the Catholic Women's League of Canada and from NCCW-affiliated Catholic women's organizations to include the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, the Auxiliary of the Knights of Peter Claver, and the Young Ladies Grand Institute. We also received personal greetings from our representative to the Religious Alliance Against Pornography, and our representatives to the United Nations in NY and the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations.

We enjoyed our speakers throughout the Convention: Our keynote speaker, The Most Reverend Frank Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport, spoke on *Disciples Called to be Joyful Signs of Contradiction in the World*. Attendees agreed that he was riveting. We also heard from Holly Joy McIlwain who spoke on *A Mission of Joy*, Gina Loehr who titled her presentation, *Blessed is She Who Believed: Embracing the Impossible Mission*, and Bob Rice who spoke and sang engagingly on *Owed to Joy: Sharing the Gifts of Love*.

We also learned a great deal from our Commission presentations: Leadership focused on our work against human trafficking; Spirituality on the prayers, monthly call-in rosary, and three mini-retreats (4 hours each) they developed this year; and Service provided information on

their monthly spotlight on member good works, and on our program uniting our Catholic school students with their counterparts in the Holy Land to increase awareness of their realities. We also heard from the Executive Director of the National Fund for Catholic Religious Vocations who thanked us for our Vocation Purse Club. Our nationally acclaimed Leadership Training Development Team provided an informative and entertaining summary of what they can present to help councils transform seemingly impossible missions to the possible. Ellen Bachman, Past President and member of our Education Team skillfully demonstrated how to use the NCCW Guide through *Evangelii Gaudium* (Pope Francis' *Joy of the Gospel*) for parishes and CCW meetings.

On Friday morning, we enjoyed a very special time as Nympha White was named the recipient of the Our Lady of Good Counsel Award this year in recognition of her many many good works.

Over 300 attendees gathered Friday evening for the amazing Tamburitzans, a Pittsburgh-based ensemble of young artists who took us on a cultural journey with song and dance.

We prayed two rosaries: One for healing and peace in our Church and for all affected by the clergy abuse scandal and another was an International Rosary offered in English, German, Spanish, Italian, and Latin. Beautiful Masses were held each day where we prayed for our deceased members and for many other intentions, and recognized our Past NCCW Presidents. We were blessed to have The Most Reverend David Zubik, Bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, The Most Reverend Gregory Parkes, USCCB liaison to the NCCW and Bishop of St. Petersburg, the Most Reverend Frank Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport, and the Most Reverend Edward Malesic with us for various Masses and His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, President of the USCCB and Archbishop of Galveston-Houston to preside at our Closing Mass. We are most grateful to them and to our Spiritual Advisors, chaired by the Reverend Richard Dawson.

At our Annual Business meeting we adopted four resolutions: Mentoring At-Risk Youth, Treatment of Those Affected by Mental Disorders, Building Our Future, and The Environment - Reduction in Plastic Use. We heard reports detailing all the work undertaken on our behalf at the UN by our representative and an update from our representative to the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations.

At the Closing Session, we witnessed the lovely ceremony to install our new Province Directors as one-half rotate off each year and participated in our Recommitment to the NCCW Service. We applauded the work they do to ensure that ideas, comments, and resources pass from National to all levels of Council and from parish and diocesan levels to National. This important communication guarantees that we are all united in our efforts, voice, and presence.

We were treated to a great introduction to the location of our next Convention, Atlanta, Georgia that will be held from August 22-24, 2019. The invitation was made with several dressed in costumes representing Georgia and Atlanta-related teams and companies. The formal invitation was extended by the famous duo of "Scarlett and Rhett" with Scarlett attired

in her lovely “curtain rod gown” and Father Rhett doing his best to keep his moustache attached!

Prior to the conclusion of the Closing Liturgy, we were delighted as Rose Martinet was installed as National Treasurer.

That evening, we met for the last time at this Convention to enjoy a wonderful banquet highlighted by a lovely musical performance provided by the very talented members of one family. Everyone present enjoyed a great evening.

We are so grateful to Convention Chair, Jean Kelly, the Pennsylvania hostesses, and our NCCW staff who all worked so hard to make this a lovely time enjoyed by all in attendance. We also are very grateful for all who attended the Convention and who will take the information learned as well as the message of the prayers and the fun we shared back to all who could not make it this year.

This convention provided a wonderful opportunity for our Council sisters to gather from across the nation to learn, pray, and have fun together. We look forward to implementation of our resolutions and to maintaining the friendships made at this Convention. We go forth filled with determination to *Reflect God's Joy as Missionary Disciples -Mission Possible!*

-Maribeth Stewart Blogoslawski
NCCW President