

# THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

Issue 21

cwlstmichlon@gmail.com

June 2024

## Message from our Vice-President Stephanie McIntyre



### A Year at a Glance

Since the return of meeting in person at monthly meetings after the pandemic, we have seen, heard and accomplished much over the past 16 months. We have had many guest speakers, including Father Jim Mockler for the Diocesan Lenten Retreat in February 2023, Diocesan Archivist Deb Majer with her talk on the history of the CWL in the London diocese in March, Pro-Life dialogue training with Maria McCann in April 2023, the October 2023 self-defence presentation with Tammy Bernardo, and a presentation about the St. Vincent de Paul housing initiative in November.

As well as guest speakers, we have had many functions and events. In March, our council organized and hosted this year's World Day of Prayer Service. We've held our annual Spring Bake and Perennial Plants Sale, raising money for the various charities we support. We've had our Crowning of Mary ceremony led by various women of the CWL and open to the parish. We hosted our second annual Spring Friendship Tea which started last May and is now a regular event, as well as the annual Spring Dinner Dance organized by the CWL and the Knights. And of course, our CWL diocesan convention, held in Sarnia last year and in London this year, is always a great opportunity to catch up with old friends from afar and to meet and make new friends.

Back in the fall, we organized our yearly membership drive on a weekend in late October. Many new members joined and a number of transfer members and returning members attended and renewed their memberships. This was a very successful effort facilitated by Darlene Charette and many members of the council, and we decided to submit our story to the CWL National for inclusion in the Spotlight section of their website. We were selected to be included, and excited that as a result a CWL council in Alberta contacted us for information for their own membership drive.

In November, we had our annual Pie Baking Day and Bake Sale and Craft Sale. Many hands were on

board for these events, as well as for our Saturday morning Christmas Party.

In December we had our council CWL elections, and a new executive was voted in to serve a two-year term from 2024 – 2026. Under the new pillars of Faith, Service and Social Justice, the officers are President, President-Elect (Vice-President), Secretary, and Treasurer, with sub-committees for Membership, Communications and Correspondence. The new theme for the Catholic Women's League is "Here I am Lord, Send me."

A big thank you goes out to our ukulele group the SMUGlees for providing music and entertainment over the past year and more at monthly general meetings, Christmas Socials, the Friendship Tea, the Crowning of Mary ceremony and many other events, including music in the community, such as at long-term care, nursing homes, and the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

Closing out our busy year with our Potluck Dinner and Service Pins celebration, we now look forward to a restful summer until our return in September.



## Prayer Intentions

We have offered specific prayer intentions for each month and we are asking not only each of our members but also all the members of St. Michael's community, to bring these intentions to the Lord. Let us continue to lift one another up in prayer.

**June:** Let us pray for our priests, seminarians and those who are called to Religious life.

**July:** Let us pray for those who are contemplating suicide, and their loved ones.

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From Our Spiritual Advisor Fr. Felix Odobi

## A Summer of Joy: Bringing Joy to Families, Relatives and Friends



We look forward to summer with joy and enthusiasm. Summertime is associated with happiness and relaxation, a break from usual routines and engaging in outdoor activities, like going to parks, beaches, hiking and playing golf. During

summer, we travel, covering distances for vacation to visit families, relatives and friends.

As we countdown to this year's summer, let us remember to be intentional about being joyful and bringing joy to those we meet. It is our calling to be joyful as Christians and to bring joy to others. Peter tells us that we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession..." and we are called to "declare the praises of God who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

We can draw our inspiration from Mary's visit to Elizabeth in the Gospel of Luke 1:39-45. Her visit brought joy not only to Elizabeth but even to the child in her womb. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent Angel Gabriel to Mary to announce to her that she would become the mother of His Son. Following the annunciation, Mary set out to visit Elizabeth. Her visit to Elizabeth was a joyful encounter. As soon as the sound of Mary's greeting reached Elizabeth's ears, the baby in her womb 'leaped for joy' (Luke 1:44). Although Mary had more questions than answers concerning her pregnancy, although she did not understand fully well what it meant 'to be conceived of the Holy Spirit', although she was surrounded by many imperfections, she trusted God and walked down the path of joy, recognizing God's presence and actions in her life.

Someone may ask, how can I be joyful and bring joy to others when I am going through difficult times? How can I be joyful when I am grieving the death of a loved one; when my family is going through a crisis; when we are not on talking terms in my family; when I am struggling financially, when nothing seems to be working in my life?

We are joyful not because of the absence of pain and imperfections, but because like Mary, we recognize

God's presence and His actions in our lives. Consequently, we are prepared to feel and endure pain in order for us to experience the inevitable joy, even in chaos. This requires the courage to change the things we can change and the courage to accept the things we cannot change. Paul invites us, "to rejoice always, to pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you [us] in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

As we walk down to parks, as we visit beaches, as we go hiking, as we visit families, relatives and friends, let us be joyful and be channels of joy to people we meet. Like Mary's visit to Elizabeth, let our visit to our families, relatives and friends cause them to 'leap for joy'.

I hope you have a beautiful and joyful summertime!

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## League Lingo

Joan Lobsinger

The CWL diocesan newsletter, The League Lingo, is produced 3 times per year at a cost of \$5 for a hard copy. If you are interested in purchasing a 2025 subscription, please let Dorothy Solomon or Joan Lobsinger know by early September. The spring issue is 16 colourful pages long and is a good read. It contains photos from the London Diocesan Convention and some of our members can be found on page 3. The League Lingo is also online at <http://www.cwllondon.com/>

## In case you missed it — we've gone National!

Gail Brown

Check out our photos and short account of our membership drive in the latest issue of the League Magazine. We've gone from the Spotlight section of the website to page 18 of the national publication.

Next up, our successful Spring Friendship Tea will be submitted and hopefully selected.

<https://www.cwl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024.v100.n2-The-Canadian-League-final.pdf>

## Provincial CWL

The Ontario CWL ON-Line Newsletter for June is now available, featuring the Peterborough Diocese and a lovely farewell message from President Linda Squarzo. Access it here or sign up for the emails to receive it automatically.

[2024 June ON line newsletter 2 \(cwl.on.ca\)](https://www.cwl.on.ca/)

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## My Daughter, My Hero

Dorothy Solomon



At our May meeting I was fortunate to be able to share my daughter Sherrill's experience living in a women's shelter, starting at age 19 when she was hit broadside by an impaired driver who ran a red light. The air bag imploded but burst and her seatbelt did not catch. Her head went through the windshield

leaving her with permanent brain injury. After this, she met a man named Sam, who offered to let her stay in the basement apartment of his house. Even with Sherrill's love of cooking, it took all her energy to follow a recipe. Gradually she gained more ability to function and perform activities of daily living.

But my monthly visits led me to be concerned because there was a sense that something was not right, she seemed scared. After one visit, she indicated she wanted to come home to London but when we were ready to leave Sam had convinced her to stay. On my way home she phoned and said "Please come back and get me." I went back but there was no answer at the door and her phone was disconnected.

Sherrill had been in the women's shelter four times over the four years I had no contact with her. Then I found a photocopy of her driver's license and went to the London police where I was able to get a new address in Kitchener, and I was able to bring her home. By now she had a one-year-old daughter. The joint custody between Sherrill and Sam only lasted a few months and on his last turn with her daughter they both disappeared, no trace.

Sherrill is my hero. For all she has overcome she still has hope. Despite all she has endured, she is forever so grateful for life. Living in the shelters, she felt guilty that she had failed her daughter; she was dealing with PTSD and deep depression. She was given a care package from donations to the shelter, but she did not feel worthy. Counselling helped her find a glimmer of worthiness, enough to accept a Dove beauty bar, which then became a treasure to hoard, a symbol of her worthiness. "Some woman out there donated this for me, someone cares." Sherrill learned to be courageous and risk living with a purpose. She was determined to find her daughter. While in shelters she remembered only part of the prayer "Hail Mary, full of grace," that was all she knew. She

recalled the story of Mary, Joseph and Jesus fleeing and being homeless. This gave her hope.

When you donate whatever you are able to, do so with a prayer for the woman who will receive it. That she may find hope, courage, resilience, and support. As a Catholic Women's League member, you're part of a collective voice for her when she cannot speak for herself. Your united voices can lead to change. One thing Sherrill has asked is for me to create awareness about is that the women's shelter on Wellington is in plain sight, with the name on the building right beside the liquor store. She was frightened to leave there and get the bus right out front because she did not know if her abuser was waiting nearby.

Sherrill very much lives in the present moment, not worrying too much about reaching a specific goal at some future deadline. She is more concerned about living each day and loving and accepting those she meets each day. Her daughter is now 19 and Sherrill constantly holds onto hope of having her back in her life.

There are many causes mentioned here – investigation into air bag safety; M.A.D.D.; ANOVA Women's Shelter; Child Find; Brain Injury support, and abuse counseling. Whatever cause you may support, use your voice to be the spokesperson for those who have no voice.

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## CWL Spring Baked Goods and Perennials Sale – Thank you!

Thank you to the many members who supported our May 25th/26th perennial/bake sale through your donations of plants, baked goods, time and/or purchases. The \$892.50 raised will help the groups and organizations that have come to count on the Catholic Women's League for their needs as well as our CWL initiatives. Thank you for supporting this successful event.



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## Featured Member Gail Brown

Gerarda Smith-Hillier



**Our Own Double Oh Seven.** Which one of our CWL members rides on a motorcycle, owned a hot air balloon, is an amateur astronomer, and was a Customs/Immigration Officer turned Law Librarian? Who took guns away from American sheriffs and confiscated an illegal trunk load of prosthetic legs? Who wrote newsletters for various professional organizations and started our own St. Michael's CWL Newsletter? She may not have a "Double Oh Seven" after her name but we call her... Brown, Gail Brown.

Gail grew up in Windsor attending Our Lady of the Assumption Parish. The eldest of three siblings, Gail attended French First Language elementary school and then went to a girls Catholic high school. After studying Philosophy and Psychology at the University of Windsor, Gail then received a Masters in Library Science from the University of Alberta. She also received her "MRS" when she met her husband, Bruce, at the University of Windsor. They were married and moved out West. Bruce worked as a Crown Attorney in Edmonton, where they had one son. The young family moved back to London where Bruce worked in the Crown's Office and Gail worked in the London Court House Library for 33 years. The Browns had two more sons in Ontario. Gail also has two beautiful grandsons.

Gail reflects that her faith was and is greatly inspired by women. Her grandmother lived with her family; thus, she grew up with traditional Catholic values like saying the Rosary with the family after supper. In her later years Gail has deepened her faith from the

wisdom of women and especially through their witness of their faith. Gail and her husband Bruce have assisted with RCIA and Marriage Preparation, and Gail was a member and Chair of the St. Michael's Pastoral Council. She was the co-editor of the initial St. Michael's Parish Newsletters.

Gail became a member of the CWL in 1999 after being inspired by a CWL presentation to new RCIA members. She is impressed by women helping women and by the practical things the CWL does such as feeding the homeless by making peanut butter sandwiches, collecting for Anova, and in true librarian style, Gail even collected books for prisoners. As a member of CWL, Gail has had many roles such as Treasurer, Chair of Organization (membership), and Chair of Community Life and Communication. She also started, edits, and publishes our CWL newsletter.

Gail cherishes the connections and friendships she has made with CWL members over the years. It has been important for her to be around like-minded women who inspire her to be a better person. The CWL Zoom meetings helped her to get through the pandemic and she truly enjoys the "off-shoot" activities inspired by the CWL such as SMUGlees and Friday walks with members. When asked what she hopes for the future of the CWL, not surprisingly Gail would like to see a more engaging magazine from the national level of the CWL. At a local parish level Gail hopes we attract new people with new ways of thinking in order to keep revitalizing our council and the parish.

So now you know Gail Brown, and you won't be taken in by her quiet librarian demeanour. She is a strong, educated, kind, generous, faith-filled woman. Remember... besides editing, playing ukulele and baking apple pies...she can take away your gun, speed off on a motorcycle and escape via hot air balloon. She's Brown, Gail Brown.

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*"Here I am Lord, Send Me"*

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## June Potluck Dinner and Service Pin Awards

Darlene Charette

On Tuesday, June 4th the St. Michael's CWL held their final meeting before the summer break. This annual dinner is always a highlight of the year, and this year was no exception! We had a large turnout of members and visitors, the food was scrumptious, and the conversation was lively!

After dinner, a brief meeting was held. Father Felix blessed the service pins, and they were awarded to new members, and then members with service of 5, 10 ... 65 years of service were awarded. A highlight was the Maple Leaf pin which was awarded to Marilyn Morgan for a lifetime of service in many different roles and parishes. In all, 61 people were acknowledged during the ceremony. Congratulations to all the recipients who are listed below!

The service pin ceremony was followed by a local group of dancers who gave us a little glimpse into the Mexican culture, music and dancing. Many attendees participated in the group dance at the end.

Many thanks to all who helped in making this such a successful event! We look forward to reconnecting in the fall.



## 2024 Service Pin Awards:

**Insignia** -- Adeltola Adejo, Olatunda Adejo, Pauline Akumu, Jackeline Awna, Emma Mar Barrera, Patricia Boadi-Tieku, Helen Bobyk, Christine Duong Ngo, Olyenka Fayemi, Hiruni Fonseka, Rose Gemarino, Reni Mariam-George, Cinta Hernandez-Sebastia, Louise Jackman, Bincy Johnson, Evelyn Jutingo, Rosanna Luzius-Vanin, Katrina Maas, Cecilia Nwiche, Thecla Onuagu – Ibegbu, Michelle Specht, Christie Sychangco, Maryrose Udeh, Ana Lou Virtuadazo, and Judy Wright

**5 Years** – Darlene Charrette, Tamara Schubert, Janine Zacharewicz, Gina Zhang, and Joanne Zwolski

**10 Years** -- Angie MacEachern, Stephanie McIntyre, and Dah Ree

**15 Years** -- Corrie Gicante, Margaret Riehl, and Rosemay Speers

**20 Years** -- Jean Hishon, Mimi Lo, Jane McIver, Gladys O'Quinn, Janet Pope, and Shirley Troupe

**25 Years** -- Connie Cote and Gerarda Smith-Hillier

**30 Years** – Mary Maxwell and Elaine Buchner

**45 Years** -- Claire Vickery and Mary Hagan

**50 Years** -- Agnes Lansink and Carole Rawlings

**65+ Years** – Tina O.

**Maple Leaf Pin** – Marilyn Morgan



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## Annual Crowning of Mary

Megan Young

Each May, the CWL honors Mary in a very special way. We gather as a council as well as a Parish family for our annual Crowning of Mary Ceremony. This event takes place each year before our general meeting, and it serves as a reminder that our Lady is not only Queen of Heaven and earth, but she is also our Mother who cares for us with a love that is beyond measure.



Our Lady serves as a role model for each and every one of us to be a tender loving presence for our own families and one another, and to have an openness to the plan that God has for our lives. Needless to say, our Blessed Mother holds a very special place in the hearts of the members of the Catholic Women's League. At every meeting we ask in prayer for "the intercession of our patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel."

This year as your Faith Chair, I had the privilege of organizing this evening. However, this was not something that could be accomplished on my own. I had many wonderful readers, gift bearers, and our faithful Vice-President Stephanie McIntyre who did the honor of placing the beautiful pink crown on top of our Lady's head. Of course, a very big thank you to the always talented SMUGlees for providing the beautiful music for the evening, you are all such a gift to our parish family.

As I reflected more on the evening and the example Mary is in my own life, and the lives of all women, I am inspired even more to be more open and trusting to the plan that God has for me and for all of you. I encourage all of you to continue to give your "yes" to God in whatever way that may be.

Once again thank you to all who were able to join us for the evening, and also thank you to all who played a part in making this evening possible and for giving your "yes". I am looking forward to gathering once again next year for this beautiful and prayerful evening.



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## London Diocesan Convention 2024

The 104th Annual Diocesan Meeting of Members, or CWL Convention, was held in London on April 22-24, and was attended by 14 of our members, with our Spiritual Advisor Fr. Felix attending the closing banquet. Here is what they had to say about the experience.

The 2024 CWL convention was a great balance of prayer, work, learning, fun and comradeship. Each session began with prayer; the daily Eucharistic celebrations really emphasized our oneness as Catholic women with God in the work of transforming the world. The speakers and workshops gave me a renewed sense of direction and purpose. I particularly benefited from 'The Joy of Leadership' interactive workshop where I was reminded that there is a fine line between being a leader and controller. I must listen to everyone and empower each member to be part of the team. There was ample opportunity to learn from others in the diocese what they are doing. The fun and comradeship were evident in many ways. I highly recommend that all our members attend a convention. – **Dorothy Solomon**

The day I attended was very enjoyable. The speakers (Betty Colaneri, CWL National Vice-President and Colleen Martin, CWL Provincial President-Elect) were excellent and kept our attention well. Betty is a wine grower who told us that like the fruit of the vine (Catholic Women) we must stay close to Jesus (the Vine) to bear fruit. Colleen's theme was to Rejoice In the Lord Always. She certainly was a joyful speaker.

For anyone thinking of attending in the future, it is a great chance to meet with our fellow members from across the diocese. Also, we get a chance to meet the Chairs of the various pillars across the region and province. - **Marg Riehl**

It was incredibly well organized, and the food was good. It was amazing to be able to meet with so many women with similar goals. We had many occasions to share our opinions. I thought it was a great idea to make us choose an e-mail pen pal. These are just a few things - there is much more to tell. Oh yes, it was also nice to spend time with Father Felix. – **Lucie Sollazzo**

For me the thing I enjoyed the most about the Convention was getting to better know the ladies at St. Michael's. I really value the opportunity to share camaraderie with other women of faith. To just sit and share conversation around a meal or participate in Mass together made me feel like I belonged. I also enjoyed seeing other women I know but have not seen for a while. Being in a large room with so many women of shared faith and purpose was very uplifting and encouraging. The CWL is alive and strong. – **Connie Cote**

Workshop on Leadership: Use the talents of others with a team approach, meaning, even when there is a chair and a committee for different activities, all the activities are teamwork, the participation of everyone is very important!

Betty Colaneri: Vine and branches: exchange of flavours and gifts: Women's genius can capture and share these: focused on relationships.

Past President: Barbara Dowding is now the Vice-President of the North America section of the World Union of Catholic Women Organizations, based in Rome. This organization works in giving Women a voice in countries where women have no voice at all. – **Veronica Solis**

**Conference highlights continued page 8**



**Betty Colaneri**

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**Conference highlights continued from page 7**

For me, the highlight of the Convention was the mass, with so many priests, bishops and participants. The response was amazing - **Joan Roffey**

It was well-organized and well-timed. I especially enjoyed the Mix and Mingle, and the chance to choose a pen pal. Deb Majer's presentation on the history of the CWL in the London diocese was great. - (find it here [Pages from 2019 Missio.pdf \(cwillondon.com\)](#)) - **Stephanie McIntyre**

I have attended quite a few conventions over the past few years, and I've enjoyed each one. It's always great to be reacquainted with my fellow sisters of the League. This year was no exception. There were some great speakers. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Betty Colaneri, National's Vice-President. Her family owns a winery, and she compared the grape vines to the League. She talked about the need for the vine to be healthy and the need to prune it to allow for new growth.

This was the first time in a few years that I wasn't as involved in the Convention. I had no report to present, and no Mass or prayers to prepare. Bea, the Faith Chair did a great job with the spiritual component of the Convention. I could just relax and enjoy. Our responsibility of providing volunteers with snacks and manning the Hospitality room ran smoothly.

I always enjoy the fun part of convention too. The Kitchen Party Fun night hosted by St. George's council was quite entertaining. We got to listen to great east coast music, sing-along and of course dance. - **Joan Lobsinger**

Betty Colaneri told us the Lord is our vine and we, the CWL, are the branches who are fruitful for the Lord. She compared the CWL to wine, with our clarity, our focus, our finish and our ripening as we mature in our faith. If our glass is too full, there is a problem. We should leave room in our glass to savour each sip, God's words and gifts. - **Mary Maxwell**





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## A Night to Remember

Joan Roffey

April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024 was a night to remember! There was fantastic food, magnificent music and delightful dancing! What not-to-be-missed event was this, you ask? It was the St. Michael's Knights of Columbus and Catholic Women's League dinner and dance.



Just under 100 people attended the dinner/dance which opened its doors at 6:30 p.m. for socializing, followed by dinner at 7:00 p.m. The meal was catered by The King of Pigs and consisted of BBQ ribs and chicken with roasted

potatoes, salad and rolls. Then there was a selection of tasty squares for dessert served with coffee and tea. Delicious!

Before the dishes had even been cleared away, the music began, and the dance floor quickly filled. For the next 2 hours, people shimmied and shook to tunes that spanned the years.

While all this was going on, guests perused two sets of heavily laden tables. Along one wall were silent auction items and on the other was a raffle table full of wonders! Many people went home that night happily holding their new treasures.



By 11:00 p.m., the music was wrapping up, the dance floor had thinned out considerably, and the night was brought to a close – and a successful night it was! People had a wonderful time, the St. Michael's community was enriched, and money was raised to help support many very worthwhile causes championed by the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Women's League. It was truly a night to remember!



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## Spring Friendship Tea

Anita Rodrigues



The second annual Spring Friendship Tea hosted by St Michael's CWL on May 8, 2024, was a resounding success. As each group of women arrived, the noise in the church hall became louder and louder. There were hugs and exclamations of not having seen someone for "ages," everyone was dressed in spring colours, and some had flowers adorn their hair. The joy and excitement were palpable.

While the guests arrived and got seated, The SMUGlees (St Michael's Ukulele and Glee) set up their music stands, practiced their music, and arranged the group to accommodate players according to those who preferred to sit and those who preferred to stand while playing their ukuleles. The players looked balanced and cohesive.



The hall looked amazing, and the decorating team was given full marks for turning the church hall into a Victorian Tea Room. The fancy teacups and saucers, exquisite table linen, gorgeous fresh flower centerpieces, creatively decorated plates of tiny sandwiches and sweet treats, and servers donning white aprons and moving elegantly between tables serving tea from heirloom teapots transported guests to a bygone era. There was even a spring themed photo op area with a swing decorated with flower garlands set up in one section of the hall. The attention to detail was impeccable.

Father Felix welcomed and blessed the group when all were seated. He was happy to see that there were a couple of men enjoying the CWL Spring Event amidst the ninety or so women!



After the attending members of the CWL and guests chatted at their tables, partook of tea and delicate sandwiches, and exchanged stories from beautifully decorated conversation starter cards, the SMUGlees performed 10 songs. Joan Roffey, the leader of the SMUGlees group, had the audience take part and got everyone to sing, stomp their feet, and clap their hands to familiar favourites such as *Que*

*Sera Sera* and *The Glory of Love*. The SMUGlees ended their performance with *Linger* as a reminder that memories linger on and keep us smiling. The smiles in the hall got wider and wider.

With food polished off, tea pots drained to the last drop, and tables being cleared, it was time for the party to end. Dorothy Solomon, CWL President at St Michael's, announced that the person with a birthday closest to May 8 could take the centerpiece at their table. Guests at each table got another opportunity to chat. New friendships were made, old friendships were renewed.



Many commented on the fun they had and, on the friendship, and warmth of St Michael's CWL members. Members of other faiths who came from retirement homes or as guests of CWL members, commented on the beauty of the church and the welcome they received. Others commented on the fun they had, and that the afternoon was a reminder of what really mattered in life and that they would come back next year.

Congratulations to Darlene Charette, Cathie Gautier and all who helped organize the tea.

*More photos on the next page!*

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## St. Michael's Parish Family Trivia Night

Hosted by CWL & KofC

June 22, 2024

7:00pm Doors Open

7:30 – 10:30 Trivia Competition

Halfway break -pizza, pop, snack, juice  
available

Munchies Provided

**Tickets \$10:00/adult \$30.00/family**

Available from

Joan Lobsinger 519-438-4909

Dorothy Solomon 519-204-2931

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## **CWL Day at the Shrine St. Patrick's Church, Merlin, ON July 24, 2024**

9:30 - 10:00 a.m. Meet and Greet

10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Prayerful Reflection

11:00 a.m. Mass

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:15 p.m. Rosary

Bring your own lunch and lawn chair



Coffee, tea and water will be available