



The Seed Keepers

A Publication of the Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE)
Réseau Catholique pour l'égalité des femmes

Volume 28 Number 1, FALL 2016
ISSN 1924-181X

"I think at this point in CNWE's history, we also need to address changes within our organization and the world in a creative way. While we boldly redefined our vision, mission and values at our 2015 conference, we now need to flesh out what this wider vision means for us. We need to ask ourselves how we keep the 'seeds' of our work bearing fruit in the world amid the realities of our aging membership and the multiple demands on our time and energy. As we call on our church hierarchy to change, we must also address CNWE's need for renewal as well.

I hope we will continue to hear your call to lift "voices and pens against any church decision, any church publication, any churchman who does not recognize the equal human dignity, equal personal worth, equal potential for spiritual and intellectual growth of women with men." I hope we will continue to, as you say, "do something worth being alive for."

So wrote Mary Ellen Chown in her excellent love letter to Joan Chittister in our last edition of *The Seed Keepers* (*TSK*). To be honest, when I was at the task of editing that Spring 2016 edition, the one I thought would be Ottawa CNWE's last, I was mightily unsettled. (You'll recall that at the virtual AGM this year, a motion was approved to the effect that *TSK* take a sabbatical.) First, I asked, "How can we be planning a superb conference and have *TSK* on sabbatical?" Then, when I read and reread Mary Ellen's piece, I also asked myself, "Isn't this job of editing *TSK* 'something worth being alive for'?" After a bit more solemn discernment, I consulted with my faithful copy editor, Jocelyn Rait. We decided to approach the NWG with the plan of continuing — but in e-format only. And *voilà!* We hope this works. But, we trust someone/another group will come forward to take the responsibility of printing and distributing hard copies - because, truth be told, we believe both formats are essential.

We want to let you know that besides planning the 2017 Annual CNWE Conference, Ottawa CNWE has its Dialogue Project up and running. Yes, we are reading *Getting to Yes* (Harvard's Fisher, Ury & Patton. 2011) and, in an effort to raise our voices to be heard by the Church's present decision-makers, we are hard at it otherwise. We are attempting to meet with both Archbishop Terrence Prendergast and Archbishop Paul-André Durocher. The Dialogue Project committee would like to know if any of you are doing something similar.

You'll find thoughtful articles in this edition as well as news. Happy reading! Please, let's hear from you.

Contents:

Brigid O'Reilly on 'Our True Self' 2
Jocelyn Rait tells about 2017 CNWE Conference 3
Algoma CNWE reviews Mary T. Malone's latest 4
Jo Young lifts her pen to Pope Francis again 6
Good news: The Vatican's Women's Diaconate Study 8
Eileen Curteis writes Spiritual Rebirth, a poem 9
Letter from Joan Chittister 10
Membership Form 11
Save the dates 12

Virginia Lafond,
Editor



virginialafond@gmail.com

Brigid O'Reilly* shares

her reflection of "Our True Self"

Who Am I?

"Our True Self" was the topic of Barbara Fiand's talk to CNWE Toronto on a lovely late afternoon in the Friends House. Organized by a dedicated group of CNWE members, Barbara's talk was a stimulating way to start our 2016-17 season.

A Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, Barbara gives lectures, retreats and workshops on issues related to holistic spirituality, prayer, religious life, and the psychology and spirituality of human maturation.

At the outset, Fiand asked us "Who Am I?" Someone she met at a meeting said, "If you can give me an answer on that, I will be eternally grateful." The light hearted response led us to hear that what we are, what we do and where we are headed, is not who we are at all. We can look to others in our search for the answer.

Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven* suggests that we flee this hound until we collapse and the hound licks our face knowing that we want surrender. Rilke writes love poems to God and in that work he, as we can, sits *in God*. Then when we die, we have faced the complications.

Fiand reminded us of Caryll Houselander, an English woman, whose book *The Reed of God* suggests that we are the hole in a flute in which Christ moves through to us and others. We become *Christofied* by giving of ourselves.

Oriah Mountain Dreamer from Northern Ontario, in her book *The Invitation*, suggests that we can be opened by life's betrayals. We can live with failure and like the company we

keep. We can shout "Yes" to the full moon over the water. There is always some one or some thing that is beyond the junk around us. And that one or thing is part of who we are.

Teilhard de Chardin says that all of the universe is love and self gift. For us, in the 21st century, our consciousness of this, and of God's love of us, is like the discovery of fire. Christ asks us to live the way of self gift.

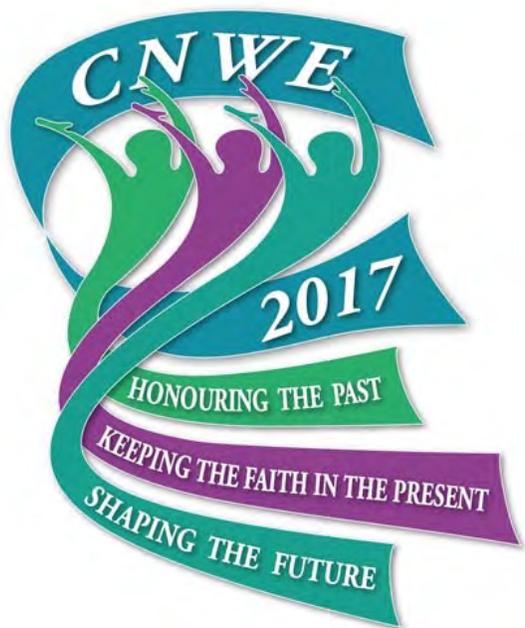
We are asked by Paul to come to consciousness. In 1 Corinthians he tells us that we are God's temple and the temple is holy. We belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

We need to know it, say it and live it. We need, as Barbara Fiand suggested earlier, to do the following: set time aside and sit in a straight-backed chair with our feet on the ground, to think. Consider an idea from the world of the spirit. Think about what I might do about the spirit's work through me. Look at a way of being influenced and active in the spirit's work that day.

We had some questions for Barbara Fiand and then Rita Patenaude gathered us in a circle around Barbara. Rita thanked Barbara and then we all joined Rita in a song of celebration to have Barbara with us for this time. We went home with more questions, new answers and a most welcome new contact for us in CNWE.

* Brigid O'Reilly is a long serving member of Toronto CNWE

Ottawa CNWE invites you CNWE's 2017 Annual Conference



Where better to be in May 2017, when Canada's Sesquicentennial celebrations will be really gearing up, than Ottawa, the nation's capital? So why not plan to come to the CNWE Annual Conference to be held on the weekend of May 26-28 at Saint Paul University on the fringe of downtown Ottawa, and maybe arrive early, or extend your stay by a day or two, to take in some of the celebrations. The Conference planners have booked a block of rooms at the University residence so you will be assured of comfortable accommodation at a reasonable price.

We are also happy to announce that Sr. Christine Schenk, founder of FutureChurch and an ardent activist on behalf of women, will be our keynote speaker on Friday evening, May 26. Many of you will have seen Chris featured in the inspiring documentary movie, "Radical Grace", but what you may not know is that she has a new interest in tracking down ancient portrayals of women celebrating Eucharist as bishops, priests and deacons. Chris will be speaking on her research – the "Honouring the Past" part of our theme for the 2017 Conference, and will also participate in an interactive session, the details of which are

currently being worked on. We will have some other exciting speakers for you as well. Ottawa is home to many women whose interests and values coincide with CNWE's and who are experts in various fields covering the "Being Faithful in the Present" and "Shaping the Future" parts of the theme. Christine Gervais, Eileen Kerwin Jones, Susan Roll and (from Toronto) Becky Lee have all agreed to participate and Canadian Roman Catholic WomenPriests will be there too. At least one workshop will be offered in French.

If there is enough interest we could arrange for a showing of "Radical Grace", so if you would like to see it please email Jocelyn Rait at ajrait@gmail.com with **Radical Grace** in the Subject line. We are currently preparing the registration brochure which will be available online as well as in hard copy, and our publicity experts are working on posts for Facebook and other social media. You will have a chance to indicate if you are interested in some of the Sesquicentennial events, such as bus tours, sightseeing cruises on the Ottawa River, visits to Parliament Hill or the various national museums, or the National Gallery which will be curating special exhibitions.

The Conference planners are looking forward to presenting an interesting and inspiring weekend for you, and hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity to see something of the beautiful city of Ottawa. Please write the dates in your diary: **Friday, May 26 – Sunday, May 28, 2017**. We hope that many CNWE members and friends will join us!

Jocelyn Rait for the 2017 CNWE Conference

Many thanks to Ron Tourangeau for designing our conference logo.

Algoma CNWE*reviews:

Mary T. Malone's *The Elephant in The Church*

Malone, Mary T.
*The Elephant in The Church:
A Woman's Tract for Our Times.*
Dublin, The Columbia Press. 2014



According to Mary T. Malone, women are *The Elephant in the Church* as she has entitled her latest book. This volume is a captivating read by an author who has spent years researching the role of women and Christianity. It is a detailed accounting of the systematic removal of women, through oppression and vilification, from any official role in the Church save that of obedient silence. Malone's approach is an historical timeline of Christianity situated within the political, socio-economical and patriarchal experience of each period, providing us with an overview of the often unacknowledged role of women in the history of the Church.

The book explores what Malone terms 'Women Christianity' and includes chapters on the women mystics and the Marian influence on the Church's misogynist perception of women. She helps us to understand how and why women's experience, theology and ministry have been ignored, silenced and written out of history. She clarifies in a very direct way how the burden of the "created second and sinned first" teaching has crippled women's contributions to the theological development of the Christian faith tradition.

Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing. (1 Timothy 2:11-15)

Malone writes that this has always been seen as the Biblical explanation as to why women have to take second place. "It is clear that many of these ecclesiastical attitudes towards women still prevail, as women are excluded from all contributions to church teaching and governance, even on issues that concern their own lives. It is men, and men only, who still write the moral code for women in all aspects of their lives" (p 86-87).

At the heart of her book are the intriguing descriptions of the women mystics of the Middle Ages who all believed in a loving God, one who is eternally "present ... loving and active in [every] person's life"(p61). They come alive as very real people of faith, commitment and courage. We are treated to Malone's beautiful and resonant poetry, using words taken directly from the writings of Hildegard of Bingen, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena. In particular, the 'oneing' notion of Marguerite Porete and Mechtild of Magdeburg's image of "mingling" evoke intimate images of God. Malone writes: "as with all the mystics there is a sense that from the beginning, even before time, women were intimately connected with God" (p75). Even though maligned by the Church, these women saw themselves as created *imago Dei*: "then in the gentle mirror of God, I saw my own dignity" (Catherine of Siena, p110). Malone goes on to describe how women throughout the following centuries took upon themselves the task of ministry; how women "without any call or clerical direction... set out to follow the Gospel on their own initiative, and with their own spiritual integrity and ingenuity". p133)

In describing the Marian influence, Malone notes: “Devotion to Mary has delayed strenuously, rather than promoted, any efforts at promoting respect for the dignity and rights of women in the Catholic Church” (p145). In her chapter entitled ‘The Sixties: Vatican II and Feminism’ we read that Christian feminists discovered “they had a Christian history, a legitimate history of the presence and teaching and wisdom of women down through the ages that had been intentionally buried. The seeds of a newly inclusive Christianity were in their hands and they joyfully took up the task ...”(p 163). As she concludes her book, Malone describes the two paths that Christianity has travelled through the centuries: “one recognized, acclaimed and celebrated in word and liturgy, the other hidden, often reviled, unrecognized and uncelebrated”. (p 171) For the Church to survive, she maintains that the two paths will have to meet. “Women have had to create their own religious universe, and it is the uniting of these two universes [the other, the male symbolic universe that is Catholicism], practically unknown to each other, that will save the Church of God in our time” (p171).

For some readers of this book there was the concern, after having read the trilogy of *Women & Christianity*, that *The Elephant in the Church* would be ‘same old, same old’. However, we found that we enjoyed it and learned. For others, Malone’s book

provided their first introduction to the paucity of the documented presence of women in our Church. The reading of this book evoked many feelings from the readers: “affirming”; “anger and sadness at the oppression and vilification of women in a church I have always loved”; “gratitude to be made aware of our history in the Church”; “sorrow and frustration that for centuries the wonderful female attributes of love, compassion, nurturing have played such a small part in the overall theology of the Catholic Church”; “depressed, a feeling of meaninglessness to the Catholic church”; “perplexed – what can we do?”.

This book is a must read. It is not just another book on history, theology and women. It is a readable and informative story. Read it and pass it on again and again, with hopes that our sisters and brothers sitting in our pews will gain new insights and be open to the Spirit renewing our church. This story is over 2000 years old and still women do not have an official voice in our Church. The time is now and it is up to us, the grassroots, to open the doors and let the elephant be heard.

*Algoma CNWE covers an area of northern Ontario which includes Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and Elliot Lake.



Katherine Adolph



Mary Doyle



Jackie Frolick



Sheila Hoo



Shirley Kindred



Carol Simon



Rose-Marie Valade

Jo Young writes to Pope Francis again



Jo Young
15 Chantilly Gate
Stittsville, ON K26 2B1 Canada

October 25, 2016

Dear Pope Francis,

Because you seem to have opened the doors of the Vatican and made a new connection to today's world, I am bold enough to address my concerns to you. I am a contributing member of Holy Spirit Parish in Stittsville, Ontario, a member of the Catholic Women's League of Canada, and of the Canadian Catholic Network for Women's Equality.

In your book, *The Joy of the Gospel*, you claim that "The reservation of the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open for discussion," yet I hope you will be open enough to hear me with respect to this question.

St. John Paul II explains (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, Part VII [23]) that "Since the human being – man and woman – has been created in God's image and likeness, God can speak about himself through the lips of the Prophet using language that is essentially human." In the text of Isaiah 54:5, ("For your maker is your husband ... the God of the whole earth he is called") St. John Paul II points out "the expression of God's love is '*human*' but the love itself is '*divine*.' Since it is God's love, its spousal character is properly divine, even though it is expressed by analogy of a man's love for a woman." The "spousal character" of that love is described by St. John Paul II [25] by quoting John 15:13, "Greater love has no [one] than this than to lay down one's life for one's friends."¹

Yet John 4:24 explains the relation between God and those who worship God, i.e. the members of the Church. They must worship in spirit and in truth. Therefore it is important to understand and to agree upon what we mean by "spirit" and "truth." Christian Scripture and theology identify spiritual beings who could manifest themselves to humans in various physical ways. In Ezekiel 1 and 10 the prophet's representations of spiritual entities were creatures: thrones and wheels; in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, spirits manifest in a variety of ways: as thrones, crystal, and men... but always as material entities. Images on Youtube attest to the fact that humans have found it difficult to assess or comprehend spiritual entities without physical images. Clearly humans have difficulty identifying what is "spirit" and understanding the nature of the "spiritual." Unfortunately, truth is too often identified as what one prefers to believe. Yet you guide us to the discernment of truth as a revelation of love.²

St. Thomas Aquinas suggests a simple way of understanding the spiritual component of human beings: mind and will. In the living human being, mind and will interact with biologically generated sexuality and culturally shaped gender. However, God who is spirit has neither sex nor gender. Yet to God are attributed the spiritual properties of both human genders such as zeal, justice, wisdom, sensitivity, creativity, courage, fortitude, knowledge and piety, but most of all, love. Therefore, to love God is an act of the spirit. In the Eucharistic act of love, the human being surrenders all that he or she is and receives Christ in the self-giving act performed by Christ in Jesus.

In his literal interpretation of St. Paul's metaphor: "*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*" St. John Paul II describes the spiritual bond between Christ and Christ's beloved people as self-giving conjugal love. The "bride" to whom Christ gives himself in the death of Jesus forms a new spiritual entity, the Church, consisting of both men and women. According to St. John Paul II [25] both men and women are included in the concept of the "bride." The Eucharist is an enactment of union of the human spirit with the Spirit of God: an act of self-giving on the part of both God and human. Since it is a spiritual exchange, it is independent of biological and cultural trappings: neither gender nor sex enter into it. The present cultural ambiguity of gender is evidenced by the large spectrum of pronouns used to describe gender identity. Surgical procedures can transform sex, illustrating the superficiality of sex to the essential humanity of the human being.

Yet St. John Paul II insists on the necessity of a priest being male due to his literal interpretation of St. Paul's metaphor in his letter to the Ephesians and his failure to distinguish the corporeal and cultural elements from the spiritual. I have used both St. Thomas Aquinas' ideas of man's nature, now known as *human nature*, as well as 21st century sociological and medical knowledge to disentangle the spiritual from the corporeal and cultural. Remembering that the human spirit is identified with mind and will, I designate the Eucharist as a spiritual act of self-giving on the part of Jesus, the Christ. I argue that in this spiritual act, both the self-giving of Jesus, the Christ, through the actions of the priest, and the self-giving of the communicant in receiving Jesus, the Christ, are independent of sex and gender or any other bodily or cultural properties of the celebrant. There is no place for sex, gender or cultural differences in the Eucharistic offering. Therefore, women as well as men should be eligible for ordination.

Thank you for your consideration of my thoughts. I will continue to pray for the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

Sincerely yours,

Jo Young

1. *Priests For Equality: The Inclusive New Testament*, P.O. Box 5243, w. Hyattsville, MD 20782-0243, U.S.A.
2. Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy*. Loyola Press 3441 N. Ashland Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 50657, U.S.A.



You've power in your hands. PLEASE! Think about sowing some CNWE Seeds - yes, the ones you hold in your hand right now. For just \$12 a year, you can have The Seed Keepers sent to someone - someone who needs to know about CNWE and its mission, someone who knows it and wants to know more, maybe someone in the media or Send your cheque to: CNWE, Box 19594, 55 Bloor Street West, Toronto, ON M4W 3T9



CNWE'S VISION

Justice and equality for all persons manifested in word and action in the Catholic church and throughout the world.

CNWE'S MISSION

As a Canadian organization, we connect, support and represent people who seek justice for all the baptized within the Catholic church, for women throughout the world and for all of creation.

CNWE'S CORE VALUES

Inclusivity
Creativity
Celebration
Compassion
Solidarity
Collaboration
Dialogue

Good News!

Women Deacon's Commission

"Pope Francis sets up commission on women deacons: The Pope set up the commission at the request of the International Union of Superiors General, the organisation for the leaders of women's religious orders around the world. Meeting the group in May, Pope Francis said that while his understanding was that the women described as deacons in the New Testament were not ordained as male deacons are today, 'it would be useful for the Church to clarify this question.'" ...

"At least one of the members Pope Francis named to the commission — US scholar Phyllis Zagano — has written extensively on the role of women deacons in the early church, arguing that they were ordained ministers and that women can be ordained deacons today. Zagano is a senior research associate in the religion department at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York." <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/08/02>

See also: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/members-francis-women-deacons-commission-express-diverse-views>

For information about CNWE:

Go to: www.cnwe.org

Visit us and 'like' us on Facebook:
Catholic Network for Women's Equality -
Canada

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeFIJpA7axo>

Yahoo e-list: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cnwe>

PLEASE ...



to

renew

your

CNWE

MEMBERSHIP

If you haven't yet renewed your CNWE membership this may (sadly) be the last issue of *The Seed Keepers* that you will receive. You will find the renewal form in this newsletter, so don't delay, lift your pen and renew right away!

You can always check with our registrar, Christine Gebel, about your membership status:

christinemgebel@gmail.com

SPIRITUAL REBIRTH

Say
to your overloaded brain
if words become nails
then it's time
to find your oasis
elsewhere.

Time
to loosen the knot
and unchain the chain
time
for the clogged mind
to travel lightly.

Be wise
about your future
the road you choose
will determine
where you're going.

If the butterfly
instinct
is in you
stop chasing
the woodpecker
up a tree.

Your wings
are too wide
to become small
again.

Eileen Curteis, ssa



St. Scholastica Priory

355 East Ninth Street
Erie, Pennsylvania 16503-1107
Phone: 814-454-4052 • Fax: 814-459-8066

August 11, 2016

Mary Ellen Chown
272 Burgundy Drive
Oakville, Ontario L6J 4G1

Dear Mary Ellen,

Thanks so much for the copy of the ~~M~~^NWE Newsletter. The letter form of the book review was an intimate and delightful format. Thanks so much for that.

And the rest of the newsletter was great, too. I can see why the Forum remains such a success after all these years with groups like this renewing the church. For all our sakes.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Joan'.

If today you hear God's voice, harden not your heart. (Psalm 95:8)

Rule of Benedict: Prologue



Do, do, do
... renew!

CNWE MEMBERSHIP FORM:

(Please print clearly!)

Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

Email _____

Phone(s): _____

New membership or, Renewal:

All memberships include three issues of *The Seed Keepers*, the CNWE newsletter.

Please check one:

- _____ \$50.00 annual CNWE membership
- _____ \$80.00 annual CNWE couple membership
- _____ \$25.00 (students and those unable to pay the full annual membership fee)
- _____ \$60.00 annual international membership
- _____ optional additional donation of \$ _____

Please send your cheque made out to "CNWE" to:

CNWE,
Box 19594,
55 Bloor Street West,
Toronto, ON M4W 3T9

To facilitate networking, CNWE sends out the membership list once a year, only to members. We do not otherwise release membership information. If you would prefer not to have your name on the membership list, please check this box . Thanks!



The Seed Keepers

Volume 28 Number 1, FALL 2016

ISSN 1924-181X

The Seed Keepers
Publication Team

Virginia Lafond
Jocelyn Rait

...
(With approval from the
NWG, having taken leave
from
Sabbatical leave)

CNWE

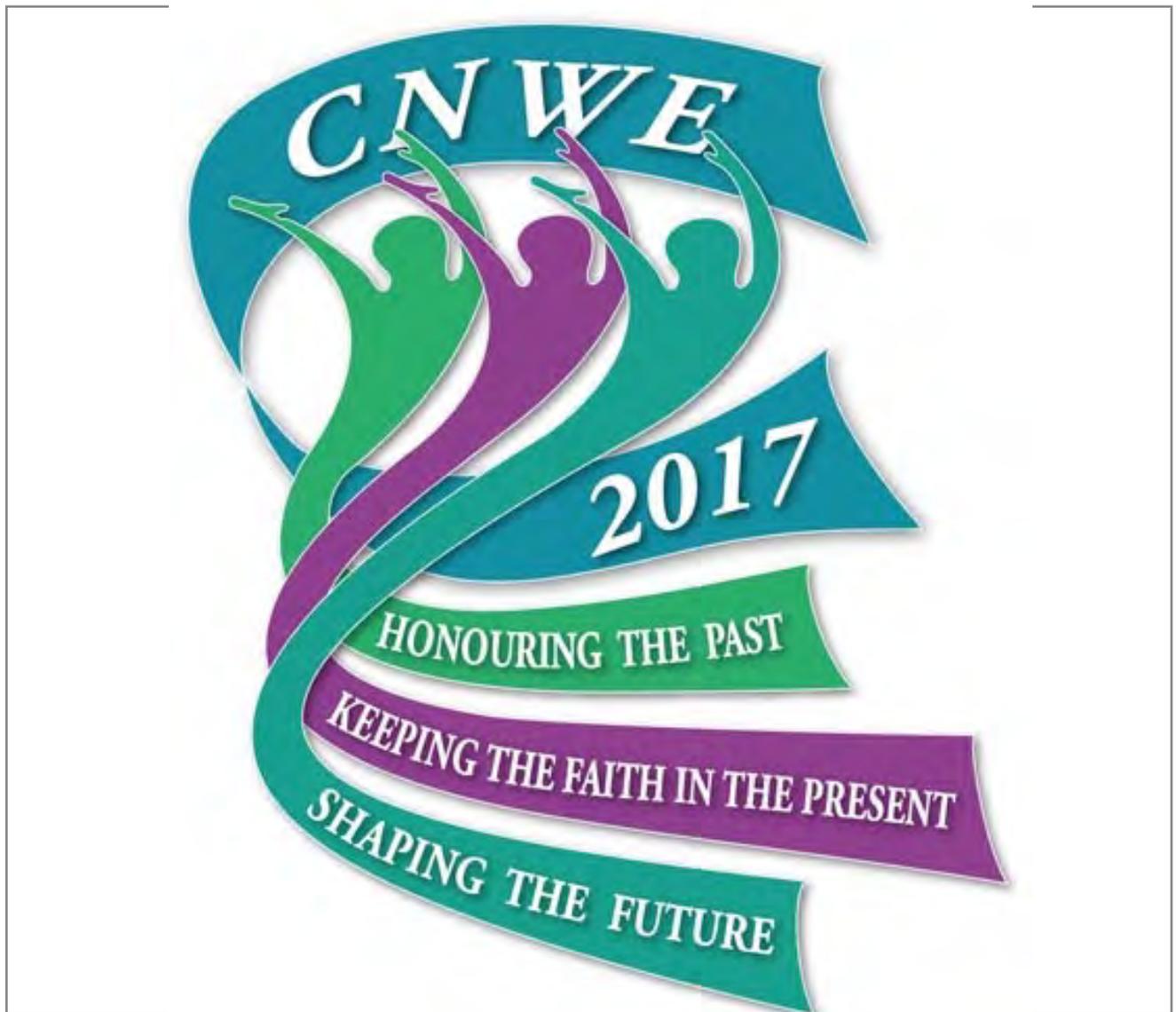
National Working Group
(NWG)

Denise Wiggins, Toronto ON
Secretary

Janet Speth, Toronto ON

Kathy Cameron, Regina SK

SAVE THE DATE!



**The Catholic Network for Women's Equality
National Conference and AGM
FRIDAY, MAY 26 TO SUNDAY MAY 28, 2017
at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, ON
All are welcome!**