

An Introduction to NCCW:

The National Council of Catholic Women



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Information was compiled and written by the  
NCCW Leadership Commission.

## The National Council of Catholic Women: WHO ARE WE?

### Women of Prayer and Action

- Provide a Common Voice for All Catholic Women
- Promote Catholic Values and Principles
- Provide greater Service and Have a Greater Impact

**The National Council of Catholic Women** was established on March 4, 1920, under the guidance of John Burke, as an initiative of the Lay Organizations Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Burke wrote a letter to the 114 bishops of the United States, and requested that they each send one to three women diocesan representatives. Nearly two hundred women gathered that first weekend, and officially voted on the constitution and the executive committee.

The Bishops put forth a threefold purpose for this unified group. First, it would give a common voice to all Catholic women in the United States in matters of national welfare and issues of concern to the Church. Secondly, a large, unified, national group would ensure that national committees and national movements would recognize our Catholic values and principles, especially in the areas of religious, moral and general welfare across our country. In addition, the bishops felt that uniting the work of existing Catholic women's organizations would enable greater service and have a greater impact in meeting the needs of our times.

Today, members of **The National Council of Catholic Women** come from every corner of our country, both individual members and affiliated Catholic women's groups. Membership is open to ALL CATHOLIC WOMEN in the United States. We are professional women in the workplace, active military and at-home moms. We are aunts and godmothers, sisters and friends. We are married, widowed and single Catholic women living in cities and rural farming communities, suburban towns and retirement villages. We are ALL CATHOLIC WOMEN living out the mission of **The National Council of Catholic Women**:

***The National Council of Catholic Women** acts through its membership to support, empower and educate all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service. **NCCW** programs respond with Gospel values to the needs of the Church and society in the modern world.*

### Living out our MISSION:

“NCCW RESPONDS WITH GOSPEL VALUES TO THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN THE MODERN WORLD.”

**SOCIAL SERVICES:** In 1921, the U.S. Bishops asked NCCW to be responsible for the financial and academic responsibilities for the *National Catholic School of Social Services*. We kept this school going through the stock market crash of the 20’s, the great depression of the 30’s and World War II. In 1947 it was merged with the School of Social Work at Catholic University.

**WAR REFUGEES:** NCCW supported war refugees from Germany, Korea, and Vietnam. In 1996, through our partnership with Catholic Relief Services, NCCW launched the *Refugee Women’s Emergency Fund* to provide safety and basic necessities to refugee women and children wherever the need is greatest.

**VATICAN II:** NCCW was represented at the Second Vatican Council. Our President was the only lay woman observer at the Vatican Council and was presented with a copy of *Apostolicam Actuositatem, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, by Pope Paul VI.

**POVERTY, HEALTHCARE, WICS:** NCCW was involved with several national and international organizations concerned with social issues of the time. Programs and initiatives dealing with poverty, the status of women, issues of race, health and education of women, and Native Americans were all areas addressed by NCCW. For example, NCCW was instrumental in facilitating WICS (Women in Community Service) programs in the US and recruiting young women for Job Corps.

**ADVOCACY:** NCCW has long advocated for a repeal of the abortion laws and the recognition of the dignity of the human person at every age and stage of life. In the 1960’s we worked to ensure desegregation and continue to support equal opportunities for all Americans. In the area of women’s health, NCCW members’ advocacy helped make osteoporosis screening become a routine part of women’s healthcare, covered by insurance.

**EDUCATION:** Programs, brochures, prayer resources and leadership tools have been created and provided to our members on topics as varied and timely as Respite Care, Domestic Violence, Mentoring, International Outreach and Development, Equal Pay for Equal Work, Human Trafficking, Meeting Management, Drug and Alcohol Awareness and Ending Hunger. Annual national gatherings include speakers and workshops which have always addressed national and global issues of the Church. *Catholic Woman*, the magazine of NCCW, has provided education and spiritual enrichment since 1975.

**INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH:** Since 1946, NCCW has worked with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) through “Works of Peace” Programs: Water for Life, Madonna Plan and Help a Child adding “Works of Reconciliation” in 1996 to mark the 50 year anniversary of the NCCW/CRS partnership. In 2011 NCCW added a partnership with Cross Catholic Outreach. Members recently traveled with Cross to Haiti and Guatemala to learn more about programs we fund which directly help women and children.

## WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW!

As we approach the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the National Council of Catholic Women in 2020, we are proud of our history and accomplishments. We are also excited about new programs, continued international outreach, service opportunities, and the advocacy efforts of our membership today. We anticipate a future of continued leadership in the Church---and we hope **YOU** will join us.

**Catholic Woman**, the magazine of the National Council of Catholic Women, is published quarterly and sent to all individual NCCW members and presidents of all affiliate levels.

The **NCCW website** offers a wealth of material including general information, membership opportunities, events, resources, press releases and online shopping.

**CONNECT** is our monthly electronic newsletter, arriving in your inbox, with timely information and inspiration. All individual NCCW members and all affiliate level presidents receive CONNECT.

**NCCW Programs**, which respond to the needs of the Church and society, are now available to download (free) from the NCCW website [www.nccw.org](http://www.nccw.org), for example:

- “We are Called to Witness!” New Evangelization Program
- “Women Healing the Wounds,” Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Program
- “Media: What is the Message?” Program alerting individuals and families its harmful effects
- “Spiritual Adoption of the Unborn” Program of prayer and support
- “Mary’s Mantle” Program for brides and grooms designed to strengthen marriage
- “Prayer to End World Hunger” annual event in November

Monthly leadership and advocacy **Conference Calls** on varied topics are open to all and give members from across the country an opportunity to learn and share with each other.

An **Annual Convention** is held each fall in different locations throughout the United States. Conventions offer members inspiring liturgies, nationally recognized speakers, workshops, and the sisterhood of being together and forming new friendships.

**E-mail Communication** is used at every level to keep members connected and informed. E-mail also allows us the privilege of praying for each other across the country.

**National Service Projects**, organized through the Service Commission, offer a united opportunity and a huge impact. In addition, at each Convention there is a special charitable collection for a local organization or facility.

**Cross International Mission Trips** enable members to see first-hand where our contributions are making a difference in the world. (Participation is personally financed, contributions are never used.)

**Catholic Relief Services Partnership Programs:** Members continue to support Water for Life, Madonna Plan, Help-A-Child Global and the Refugee Women Emergency Fund meeting the needs of women and children throughout the world.

NCCW is a full rights voting member of the **World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO)** and our representative serves on the WUCWO Board of Directors.

# MEMBERS OF NCCW

by Jane Carter, Leadership Commission Chair

**W**e are the National Council of Catholic Women!

**I**nclusive, because catholic means universal, with a deep and consistent

**S**pirituality rooted in Jesus Christ, the Gospel teachings and Church Tradition.

**E**ducating and empowering ALL Catholic women to evangelize---to share the Good News!

**C**ouncils across America living out the mission of NCCW,

**O**rganizing acts of service with passion and great love, meeting the

**U**rgent needs of the poor, marginalized and forgotten.

**R**eaching out with hands of service to anyone in need---

**A**ll in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

**G**ently offering prayerful support, a hand up, and always

**E**ncouraging words and compassionate care---the special gift of women.

**O**ur voices join in protest to the culture of death and the inequitable distribution of wealth---we are

**U**nited to uphold the dignity of every person, equal opportunities and wise use of natural resources.

**S**isters in faith, we know that together we can change the world, one prayer and action at a time.

**L**et us continue to uphold family values and encourage new generations to embrace

**O**ur Catholic faith with excitement and fervor, echoing the "YES!" of our Blessed Mother, Mary.

**V**ibrant Catholic communities with an emphasis on welcome and hospitality, faith formation---

**I**ncluding opportunities for adult study groups and outreach programs---are

**N**ecessary to bring home the "lost" and attract those who are searching for a deeper relationship with

**G**od. Let our Councils be the yeast that makes it happen in every parish!

**L**et all members of the National Council of Catholic Women be known as both

**E**vangalists and true servant leaders---following Jesus in word and action and leadership style.

**A**dvancing our mission and the message of love, mercy, forgiveness, and truth. Healing

**D**ivisions, building bridges, seeing the value of every person as a child of God---

**E**verywhere---in our families, our Councils, our parishes, our neighborhoods and our nation.

**R**ealizing that when we are known for sharing the Gospel and following in Jesus' footsteps as

**S**ervant leaders, we will indeed be the seeds which fall on fertile ground, and grow one hundredfold.

## HOW WE ARE ORGANIZED

### STRUCTURE:

The structure of **The National Council of Catholic Women** follows the Provincial structure of the U.S. Bishops. An Ecclesiastical Province includes one archdiocese and all the dioceses under the leadership of the Metropolitan (Archbishop). Each province chooses a Director from its local CCW leadership to serve on the NCCW Board of Directors. Province Directors and the elected officers are the voting members of the National Board of Directors of NCCW.

### NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**National Officers**

**Province Directors**

**National Staff** (support and reporting only)

**The National Council of Catholic Women** elects its **leadership (officers)** through an electronic at-large vote of the membership. All members, both **NCCW individual members** and **Affiliates**, are eligible to vote.

### MEMBERSHIP

There are two types of membership; **Affiliate members** and **Individual Members**. Both join and pay dues to NCCW. **Affiliates** are any group of Catholic women in the parish, deanery/vicariate/district, Archdiocese/Diocese. An **NCCW Individual Member** is any Catholic woman in the United States. Often, individual members ALSO belong to a local parish affiliation, but this is not required---membership is open to any Catholic woman in the United States.

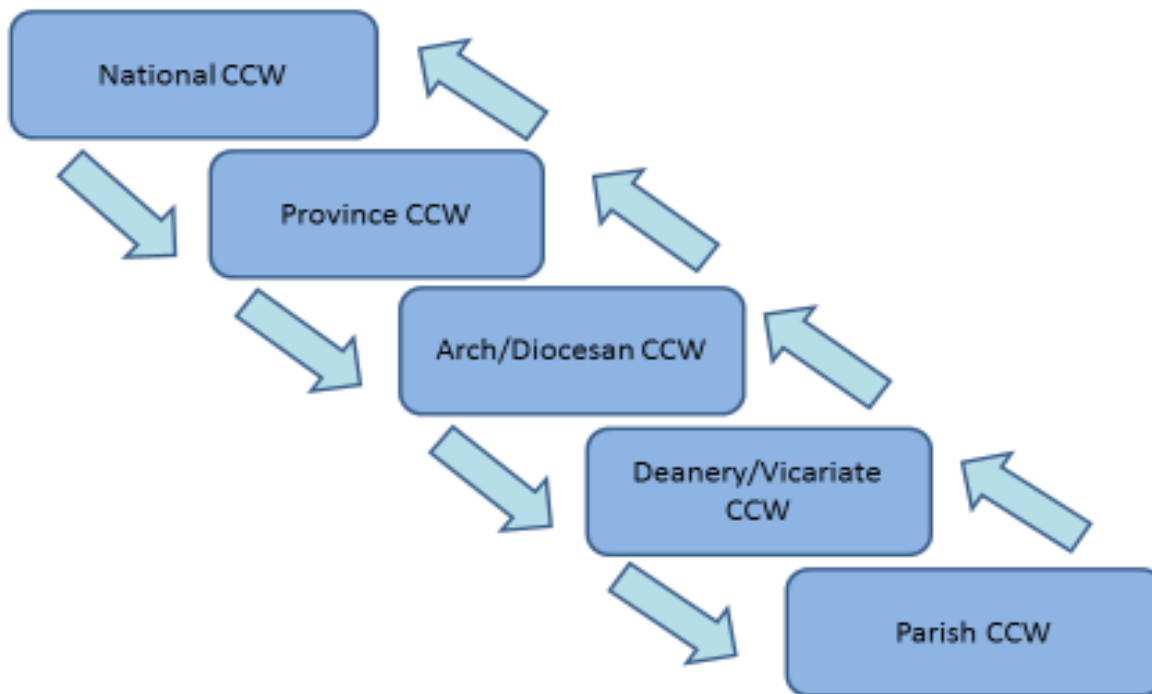
*Each level of Council plays an important part in the mission of NCCW.*

### COMMUNICATION:

NCCW has a multi-leveled structure of communication which connects all levels and allows for information to flow in both directions. When all levels are active, the organizational structure is efficient and effective. (Please refer to the chart on the next page.)

**CONNECT**, a monthly electronic newsletter; the **NCCW Website**; our quarterly magazine, **Catholic Woman**, and **e-blasts** are the primary way national leaders communicate with the membership. Affiliate Presidents and Individual NCCW members receive these publications as a benefit of membership dues. Some provinces and many Arch/Diocesan CCW Affiliates also have newsletters and websites to disseminate information.

## The Organization of the National Council of Catholic Women



...Information flows in both directions...

The **National CCW** is responsible for policy, governance and direction.

The **Province CCW** allows for regional input into the national discussion and decisions on issues, concerns, programs and initiatives.

**Archdiocesan and Diocesan CCW Affiliates** are where the action begins and the issues, concerns, and programs of NCCW and the local diocese are implemented.

The **Deanery/Vicariate/District CCW Affiliates** provide a more local level and opportunities for leadership development as well as a conduit for information.

The **Parish CCW affiliate** is the heart of the organization, where the programs change lives, the issues have faces, and the initiatives become a reality.

Individual members and CCW groups/affiliates at all levels may submit issues/topics for consideration and acceptance as resolutions at the Annual Meeting at the National Convention.



## WE NEED YOU....AND YOU NEED US

Scripture tells us in Mark 3:25: “And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.” That theme has been used in national mottos and popular songs in the more familiar version: “United we stand, divided we fall.” In other words, “Us vs. them” will never produce a positive outcome. We need to work together, share our talents, and most importantly, support one another as Catholic women. Members of the National Council of Catholic Women have the structure in place to do that.

YOU, the individual members and affiliates (groups,) are the backbone of the Council of Catholic Women. You are the ones who interact with the women in the pews. You do the work that keeps your local council going. You are the first to welcome newcomers, and the familiar face that’s always there to help or lend support. You sponsor programs and service projects in your community and then share your successes and great ideas with your national leaders, so they can be shared with others. People who see you in church recognize you and know that you are an active participant in the life of your parish.

YOUR LEADERS, the board, the commissions and committees of the National Council of Catholic Women aren’t familiar to most of the women in your diocesan and parish groups---but we are connected by our voice and goals. The resolutions voted upon at the NCCW Annual Meeting during our convention include action statements and become the work of your affiliated councils (groups) as spiritual opportunities, service projects and education objectives. Your national leaders develop programs and provide resources to support and empower your action. Your national leaders represent you at international conferences and conventions as well as serving on national committees, and then report and share with you, our members.

TOGETHER, we are the voice of Catholic women.

- WE promote an enriched prayer and spiritual life
- WE have a united voice in legislative advocacy
- WE stay up to date on Catholic women’s concerns through a quarterly magazine and a monthly e-newsletter
- WE share proven programs to use in your own parish community
- WE take advantage of opportunities to be of service
- WE form a real sisterhood of Catholic women
- WE spread the Joy of the Gospel

We need each other---EVERY CATHOLIC WOMAN--- to do God’s work.

Join us!

## How to Start a Women's Group in Your Parish

What if you don't have an active women's group in your Parish? Why not start one! It is easier than you think. Help might be available from the local Arch/Diocesan level---but even if there is no Arch/diocesan level Council of Catholic Women, you can have a parish affiliate level CCW.

Maybe there is a small group of women who take care of altar needs, a group that seems to volunteer for every community outreach project, several women who run the parish thrift shop or food ministry, a special group that serve at all the parish receptions, or a morning mass rosary group. There are always groups of women working together in the parish---what you'll need to do is unite them! All those little groups together can become a "Council of Catholic Women (CCW)." Remember, Together Everyone Achieves More!

**FIRST:** Talk with your Pastor and be sure he knows you are working on developing a Council of Catholic Women. Ask him how he sees a united Women's Group (CCW) as a benefit to the parish. Get his input and incorporate it into your plan. Share with him the mission of NCCW and assure him that our organization was called into being by the US Bishops. Ask him to serve as your Spiritual Advisor even before the group is under way. Ask for his prayers and offer him yours! Have a brief written piece to leave with him which would include the NCCW Mission Statement and any local history of Council or other Catholic Women's groups in your parish.

**SECOND:** Gather a few women who also want a Parish Women's Group and create a plan:

- Pray together and set up prayer partners for ongoing support.
- Determine the purpose, goals, and objectives to meet the specific parish/local needs.
- Brainstorm many different ways this group can help support your Pastor and your parish.
- Identify budget needs (if any) of a Women's Group.
- Create a written plan (which will probably change, but have one anyway.)
- Your plan should include the NCCW Mission Statement (a reason for being) and local goals.

The NCCW Mission Statement: The National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW): Acts through its members to support, empower, and educate all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership, and service. NCCW programs respond with Gospel values to the needs of the Church and society in the modern world.

**NEXT:** Once you have spoken with the pastor and have a plan---

- Advertise in the Church Bulletin, have a table in the Narthex, and coordinate with the Stewardship Committee for a table at the Ministry Fair if your parish holds one.
- Consider handouts for the women at a K of C breakfast or dinner, a special invitation to all women who teach religion classes or serve in other ministries. Always include the mission and info on how to attend a meeting/gathering/event.
- Create a short survey to distribute to all the women of the parish

**SAMPLE SURVEY:**

Some women of our parish are thinking about starting our own women's group, a "Council of Catholic Women." We are very interested in what you think about it!

- Are you interested in uniting with the Catholic women of our parish?
- What would you be looking for in a women's group?
- What meeting days and times would enable you to participate in a parish women's group?
- Would you be willing to attend an organizational meeting? We need your input in formulating our goals and agenda.
- How could a parish Women's Group (Council of Catholic Women) increase the help our parish provides to parishioners and in our community?
- What is the best way to contact you? (provide space to put phone, email, and preferred time of day)

**LAST:** Host a Social get-together and invite all the women of the parish, and also call and personally invite anyone that completed the survey.

**REMEMBER:**

- Keep inviting women of the parish to participate...
- Never forget to start and end with prayer and on time!!
- Maintain a balanced meeting: structured agenda with creativity and be sure you also have some social time...
- Resources are available on the NCCW website [www.nccw.org](http://www.nccw.org)
- And remember - you can always ask other Councils of Catholic Women groups for help!

## WHEN CAN WE JOIN???

**NOW!**

**TODAY!!**

**WE ARE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME YOU!!**

**INDIVIDUALS** can join NCCW anytime. Annual dues are paid each year in the month membership begins. See the NCCW Membership Flyer to sign up today!

Annual Dues for **AFFILIATIONS** (groups in a parish, deanery/district/vicariate or Arch/Diocesan) are due in December for the following year.



The **NCCW Guidance and Resource Manual** is available for purchase on the NCCW website and provides detailed information on how to create, operate and revitalize a Council of Catholic Women affiliation.