

**Mary Matthews**  
**April 2, 1915 – June 5, 2016**



*A Tribute to Mary Matthews*

Mary Matthews became a charter member of St. Edward's Parish Council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada when it was formed on April 9, 1956. She was elected as the second President of this newly-formed Council in 1958.

Mary was elected President of the Toronto Archdiocesan CWL Council in 1965, during which period she chaired a Committee to prepare and present a Brief on the Status of Women in Canada. This led to her appointment by the Prime Minister to the Federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women when it was first formed. Mary served two three-year terms.

Mary became National Second Vice-President and Social Action Convener of the Catholic Women's League of Canada in 1970, and in 1972, became National First Vice-President and

Resolutions Convener. During this time, she chaired a Committee to prepare and present a Brief on Poverty in Canada. Her leadership and diplomatic skills were recognized by the Bishops of Canada, who appointed her as Chair of the Canadian Bishops' English-speaking Committee on the Role of Women in Church and Society.

In 1974, Mary was elected National President of The Catholic Women's League of Canada. During her term as National President, she promoted the Leadership Course as a national program for all CWL councils. At the end of her term, the designation of Honorary Life Member was conferred upon Mary, of which she is very proud.

Mary served on the board of World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (WUCWO) during the years 1974 through 1987, during which time she travelled to conferences in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Bangalore, India and London, England, as well as to Vancouver, British Columbia and Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

While the CWL was closest to her heart, Mary was also fully involved in the Catholic community of Toronto. She was a member of the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto from 1964 to 1978 and became the first woman President of the Board in 1976. Mary also served on the boards of Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the Toronto Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Joint Commission of Religious Education in Ontario Schools, and the Management Advisory Board of the Catholic Register.

In 1983, Mary was appointed the founding President of Canadian Catholic Lay Associations and the lay representative for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. She served on the Board of the Canadian Council of Churches, and was the first woman to be appointed to the Board of Southdown.

In 1975, Mary was a Canadian delegate to the World Consultation on the Laity in Rome, and in 1976, was appointed by His Holiness, the late Pope Paul VI, as the first Canadian member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and was a member of the Committee for the Family announced by the Vatican in 1977. Mary was reappointed in 1978 for four more years by His Holiness, the late Pope John Paul II. In 1987, she attended the World Consultation in preparation for the Synod on the Role of Laity in Church and Society.

In recognition of her contributions to both the church and the community, Mary was awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal by His Holiness, the late Pope Paul VI, the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, and the Humanitarian Award from the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. She also became a Lady of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in 1982.

One of Mary's proudest moments was an invitation to be a television commentator during the papal visit of His Holiness, the late Pope John Paul II, during his visit to Toronto in 1984. In 1992, the Toronto Archdiocesan CWL Council dedicated their annual public speaking contest to Mary Matthews, honouring her gifts as a public speaker, a skilled communicator and a role model for youth.

Mary's life journey has crossed many continents; she has engaged in dialogue with Popes, Prime Ministers and ordinary people; she has elevated the role of women in both the church and in the wider community, and advanced the issues of social justice.

Mary's wise counsel has guided and enriched many CWL members across Canada, and her faithful and dynamic commitment has greatly benefited her own CWL Council of St. Edward the Confessor.

The members of St. Edward's CWL Council treasure Mary Matthews as the only Honorary Life Member of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in the Archdiocese of Toronto, and are proud to claim her as their own.

Submitted by Mary-Anne Matthews, Mary's daughter

\*\*\*\*\*

## MARY MATTHEWS

Mary Matthews was Toronto Archdiocesan CWL President from 1965 to 1967. She then served on the National CWL Council, and during this period, she was part of a committee that composed the first history of the CWL in Toronto.

In 1970, Mary was the first woman to speak at World Day of Prayer, at her home parish of St. Edward the Confessor in Willowdale.

Mary served as a convener on the National Council, and eventually became National President from 1974 to 1976.

In 1975, Mary was awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal by Archbishop Pocock of Toronto in recognition of her service to the church in Canada.

In 1977, Mary was appointed as an original member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and was the only Canadian woman on the council. Mary was the first woman to chair the Board of Directors of the Catholic Children's Aid Society and was founding president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Lay Associations, on which board she served for seven years.

In 1979, Mary Matthews received the Human Relations Award presented by the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews and in 1982, Mary received the Lady of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Pope John Paul II visited Toronto in 1984, and Mary Matthews narrated TV coverage of the Pope's arrival and departure.

In 1992, the Toronto Archdiocesan Council established awards to honour three outstanding past presidents. The first of these was the Mary Matthews Public Speaking Award, honouring Mary as the most successful orator. Mary was honoured by the Toronto CWL Council at the 1992 convention banquet.

Mary Matthews continues her journey as a CWL Honorary Life Member and assists her home council of St. Edward's when asked.

February 2014









