

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
CATHOLIC  WOMEN®

## An Introduction



*Our Lady of Good Counsel  
Patroness of the National Council of Catholic Women*

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By the 2020-2021 NCCW Leadership Commission

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## WHO WE ARE!

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### Women of Prayer and Action

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

### *CELEBRATING OVER 100 YEARS of NCCW Legacy and Leadership!*

**The National Council of Catholic Women** was established on March 4, 1920, under the guidance of Reverend John Burke, as an initiative of the Lay Organizations Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Father 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 online in parishes in the United States. We have programs for 8-year old girls and up, high school and college age women, 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!**

#### *MISSION STATEMENT*

*The National Council of Catholic Women 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.*

## LIVING OUR MISSION

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

Through the decades, impacting and living our mission:

**SOCIAL SERVICES:** In 1921, the U.S. Bishops asked NCCW to be responsible for the financial and academic oversight of 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 the Catholic University of America.

**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 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 American woman auditor 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 has always been 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 are all areas that have been 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, as well as early breast cancer 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, the Education Committee formed in 2017 that informs members on papal documents, 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, Refugee Women Emergency Fund, 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 promote programs like Box of Joy, which benefit children in developing countries.

## WHAT WE ARE DOING FOR OUR MEMBERS

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The National Council of Catholic Women is proud of its 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---we hope **YOU** will join us.

Highlights of some of what NCCW offers its membership:

- **Catholic Woman Magazine** - Published quarterly and sent to all individual NCCW members and presidents of all affiliate levels.
- **NCCW website** - Offers a wealth of material including general information, membership opportunities, events, resources, press releases and online shopping.
- **NCCW Programs** - Available to download (free to members only) from the NCCW website at [www.nccw.org](http://www.nccw.org). Examples:

*“We are Called to Witness!”* - New Evangelization Program.  
*“Women Healing the Wounds”* - Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Program.  
*“Women Mentoring Women”* – Resources for the Mentor and Mentee.  
*“We are NCCW”* – A video presentation.  
*“NCCW Membership Information Flyers”*- Available in English and Spanish.  
*“Friends with Pens”* - Prison Pen Pal Ministry information and guidelines.  
*“Prayer Services and Retreats”* – Facilitators and participants guides available  
*“I’m A Catholic”*- ID Card in English and Spanish.

- **An Electronic Newsletter** – Sent out monthly from the desk of the NCCW President with timely information and inspiration.
- **Conference Calls** – Join us for our monthly Rosary and Membership Calls with women from across the country.
- **Annual Convention** - Held annually in different locations throughout the United States. Conventions offer members inspiring liturgies, nationally recognized speakers, workshops, the opportunity to meet with their council sisters from across the US, and much more.
- **National Service Projects** - Organized through the Service Commission, these projects offer a united opportunity and have a huge impact on meeting needs throughout the nation. In addition, at each Convention there is a special charitable collection for a local organization or facility.
- **Catholic Relief Services Partnership Programs** - Members continue to support Water for Life and the Madonna Plan to help meet the needs of women and children throughout the world.
- **Vocations Purse Club** – In 2016, NCCW established the Vocations Purse Club to give much needed financial assistance to young women entering religious life and the communities they serve.
- **International Voice and Presence** – NCCW is represented at the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organisation (WUCWO) since 1921 and the United Nations since 1946.
- **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** – Present as an observer at USCCB meetings and in constant communication via our episcopal liaison and lay woman liaison at the USCCB.
- **Spiritual Advisors** – Help Council flourish! They understand the mission of NCCW and value the service of their Council members.

## **MEMBERS OF NCCW**

“Wise, Courageous, Loving Leaders of the Church

by Jane Carter, Past Leadership Commission Chair (2013-2015)

**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**vangelists 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

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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 of the 32 provinces 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 Officers** – These leaders include the President, President-Elect, Secretary and Treasurer who are elected through an electronic at-large vote of the membership to serve for two years. The Immediate Past President is also a member of the NCCW Board.
- **Province Directors** - Province directors are elected or appointed by their Archdiocese or Diocese to serve a two-year term on the NCCW Board.
- **Ex-Officio Board Members** (Support and Reporting only) – Include the Episcopal Liaison; NCCW Spiritual Advisors Chair; NCCW Commission Chairs; NGO Representative to the UN; Lay Woman Representative from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB); Representative to the World Union of Catholic Women Organisations (WUCWO).

### **ABOUT OUR MEMBERSHIP**

- **Catholic Women**

Affiliate and Individual Members 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. All members, both NCCW Individual Members and Affiliates, are eligible to vote.

- **Elementary/High School (Grades 8-12)**

Individual Student Membership - Ensures that you will receive our quarterly magazine, *Catholic Woman*, via personal electronic subscription. You will also receive a monthly newsletter and communiques via email to keep you informed.

Elementary/High School Affiliate Group Membership: Ensures that your group will receive our quarterly magazine, *Catholic Woman*, that reports on the issues and activities that are being addressed by your National Council of Catholic Women in today's world — locally, nationally and globally. You will also receive a monthly newsletter and communiques via email to keep you and your group informed. Each student must register as an Individual Member with NCCW.

- **Collegiate**

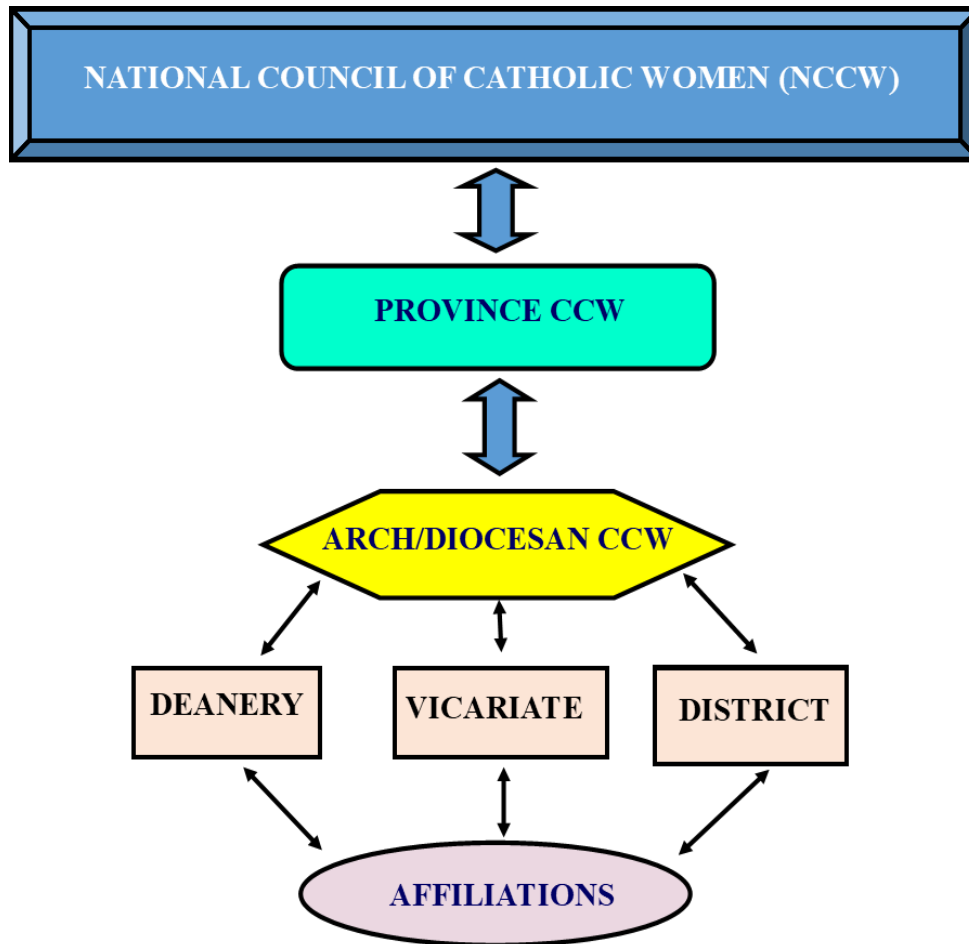
Individual Student Membership: Ensures that you will receive our quarterly magazine, *Catholic Woman*, via personal electronic subscription. You will also receive a monthly newsletter and communiques via email to keep you informed.

Collegiate Affiliate Group Membership: Ensures that your group will receive our quarterly magazine, *Catholic Woman*, that reports on the issues and activities that are being addressed by your National Council of Catholic Women in today's world — locally, nationally and globally. You will also receive a monthly newsletter and communiques via email to keep you and your group informed. Each student must register as an Individual Member with National.

*NCCW has a multi-leveled structure of communication which connects all the levels and allows for information to flow in both directions. Each level of Council plays an important role in carrying out the mission of NCCW.  
Learn more from the information and the Organizational Flowchart on the next page.*

# The Organization of the National Council of Catholic Women

## ...Information flows in both directions...



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

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

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

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

The **Parish CCW** 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

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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.

**YOUR LEADERS**, the board, the commissions and committees of the National Council of Catholic Women may not be familiar to all 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 often 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 keep members 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 share current teachings of our Church and our bishops so our members are prepared to share Catholic doctrine

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



## HOW TO START A WOMEN'S GROUP IN YOUR PARISH

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What if you don't have an active women's group in your Parish? Start one! It is easier than you think. There are always groups of women working together in the parish---what you'll need to do is unite them. 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 serves at all the parish receptions, or a morning Mass rosary group. All those little groups together can become a "Council of Catholic Women (CCW)."

### *Remember, Together Everyone Achieves More!*

**FIRST:** Talk with your Pastor to discuss your interest to develop 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. Invite him to consider serving as your Spiritual Advisor. Ask for his prayers and offer him yours! Share with him the NCCW *Prayer for Priests*.

**SECOND:** Gather a few women who also want a Parish Women's Group and create a plan. Invite your Diocesan CCW President to speak to the women about NCCW:

- 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.*

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

- Advertise in the Catholic high school and college campus ministry bulletins, in the Church bulletin as well as have a table in the Narthex.
- Download the NCCW Membership Flyer to advertise your meeting.
- Consider handouts for the women at a Knights of Columbus breakfast or dinner and invite high school and college women to participate.
- Always include the Mission Statement in your meeting.
- Create a short survey to distribute to all the women of the parish.

## SAMPLE SURVEY

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Some women of our parish are thinking about starting our own women's group, a "Council of Catholic Women." We are affiliated with the National Council of Catholic women with a mission to "support, empower and educate all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service." 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. Personally invite anyone that completed the survey.

**REMEMBER:**

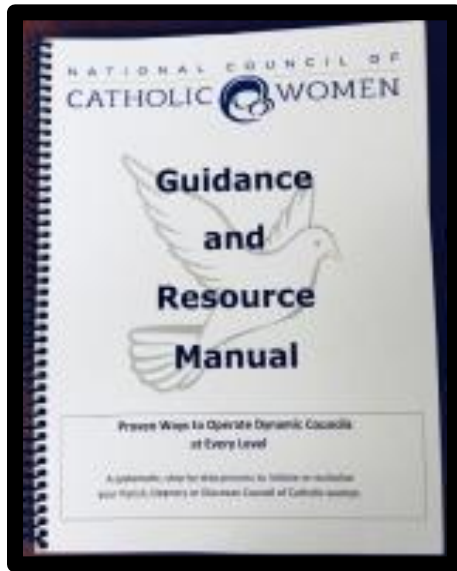
- Keep inviting women of the parish to participate...
- See if you can have a regular section in your weekly bulletin.
- Never forget to start and end with prayer and on time!!
- Maintain a balanced meeting: structured agenda with creativity and be sure you also have some social time...
- Resources are 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!



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## VISIT OUR ONLINE STORE

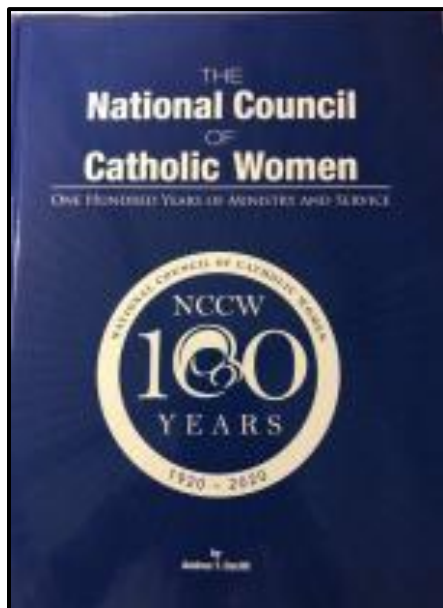
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The **NCCW Guidance and Resource Manual** is available for purchase on the NCCW website and provides detailed information on how to create, operate and revitalize a Council of Catholic Women affiliation.

(Available in English and Spanish)

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### **“The National Council of Catholic Women: One Hundred Years of Ministry and Service”**

By Andrea T. Cecilli

#### Description:

...And so, in the same year that American women earned the right to vote, the NCCW was born when nearly 200 Catholic women from around the country assembled on March 4, 1920 in Washington, D.C., to unite and fortify their efforts in service to God and the Church!

Order now by visiting our Online Store where you will find these items and lots more!

[WWW.NCCW.ORG](http://WWW.NCCW.ORG)

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