

The Lamp



United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

September 8, 2013
The Birthday of Mary

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINS:

Volume 18, Issue 3

September 8, 2013 The Birthday of Mary

Fifty years ago, the Second Vatican Council approved the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the first document passed by the Council Fathers. A few elements of that text have become common aspects of our liturgy today.

First of all was the summons to make sure that the liturgy engaged the active participation of all the People of God. Now, of course, this does not mean that every one has to do something, but rather that all are encouraged to be personally engaged in the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Some fulfill roles of service at Mass, but most of us are to be raising our hearts and voices in praise and worship of the Heavenly Father, uniting ourselves to the offering of Jesus Christ on the altar.

A second commonplace today is that we have a richness of the Sacred Scriptures presented for our instruction. When I think of how limited that presentation was before the reform of the liturgy, I give thanks to Almighty God that his Word is now so abundantly provided to us.

A third change which has taken place is the more frequent use of the homily. There is rarely a Mass at which a homily is not given. It is good that we pause to reflect on the Scripture so as to draw out its implications for us at this time and in this place. One area where we need to do a better job is to make sure we are including, where appropriate, catechetical elements into our homilies.

Another change was the elimination of a lot of the repetition of the Tridentine Mass. Thus instead of the priest saying a prayer and the people repeating it, we now say some of these prayers all together. There was an attempt to simplify the Mass. Now some will say it was a bit too simplified and that may be the case. Time will tell. But the real fruit of this development has been the mutual participation of the priest and the people in this act of worship.

Fifty years is not a long time in terms of Church History. So we still must fully tap the richness of the liturgical reform and each of us must resolve to delve more deeply into the mystery of the Eucharist. There can be no greater task and joy for Consecrated Virgins.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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The Virginal Vocation in Occidental Literature continued from June

"Do not allow," St. Cyprian wrote to Pomponio, Bishop of Dionysia, "the consecrated virgins to dwell in the same house with men: do not say that this is because they have a common bed, but even the same house. Because sex is weak and the age is a temptation, those virgins must be addressed and faced by us in their actions... It is necessary to act soon to separate them immediately, while they may still be separated in innocence" (quoted by Francisco de B. Vizmanos, SJ, *The Christian Virgins of the Ancient Church*, BAC editors, Madrid, Spain, Second Edition 2009, 91).

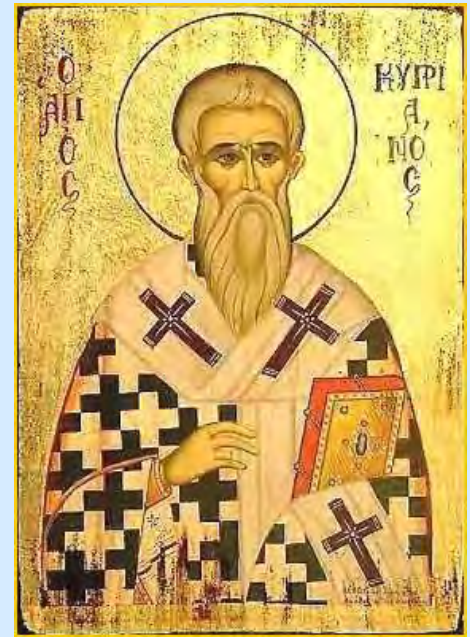
We referenced the above quote from St. Cyprian in our first article about this ancient error that has occurred in the lives of some ascetic virgins. In this article we quote from different authors among the Fathers of The Church as they address virgins who desire to be received as consecrated virgins in the Church. These ancient topics remind us to pray and to recognize that our virginal vocation is a great gift, even in the midst of errors in past and recent centuries.

When quoting the letters of "Pseudo-clement," Jesus Alvarez noted that the itinerant ascetic preachers of the first Christian communities worked to build the Kingdom of God in a common apostolate with female virgins (Cfr. Jesus Alvarez Gomez, C.M.F., *La Virginidad Consagrada, Realidad Evangelica o Mito Socio Cultural*, Theological Institute for Religious Life, Madrid, Spain 1977, 68-69). The scandal of cohabitation began when the male itinerant ascetic preachers left the itinerant apostolate and began a life of cohabitation with the female virgins. An itinerant ascetic preacher was the first to condemn this type of cohabitation (Cfr. Pseudo-clement, *First letter to Virgins*. Ruiz Bueno, O.C., 283).

What began as the product of an apostolate between ascetic preachers and virgins developed into the phenomenon known in the Ancient Church as "Spiritual Marriage" or the "Third Via" of affective interactions, as it is named by Father M. Alcalá: "It is a way of living the religious consecration or, in their case, priestly celibacy, that keeping, on the one hand, a certain continence in intersexual genital activity, aims, moreover, to integrate the complementary aspects of the erotic sexuality of each sex, in order to gain a greater emotional and human maturity" (Alcalá, M., *Third Via and Ancient Christianity*, "Razón y Fe" 1976, 333).

This "spiritual marriage" between ascetics or clerics, and virgins or women who also lived an ascetic life, was never approved by the Church. The Church documents we have condemn this movement as an abuse, and given the repeated condemnations by the ecclesiastical authority, the phenomenon must have been quite prevalent throughout ancient Christianity. The first case of official condemnation by the Hierarchy was at the Synod of Antioch in the year 269, called to condemn dogmatic errors of Paul of Samosata (Eusebio de Cesarea, *Encyclopedia of History*, Vol. VII, 30,12, BAC, Madrid, Spain 1973, 490). Indeed, after condemning his Christological and Trinitarian doctrines, the Conciliar Fathers, not wanting to deal with an issue so scandalous to the people of God, stated: "About those sub-introduced women, as they are named by the people of Antioch, to you [Paul of Samosata] and your presbyters and deacons, we have not a word to say" (Cfr. H. Achelis, *Virgines subintroductae*, Leipzig, 1902 quoted in Vizmanos, 91).

Even today, the words of the Church Fathers speak to us as consecrated virgins, admonishing us to guard against certain affective relationships, especially with men, always with the vision of deepening in union with our Divine Spouse. For the reason behind the consecration of our virginity is essentially "for the sake of more fervent love of Christ and of greater freedom in the service of [our] brothers and sisters" (*Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity*, 2). Let us, then, as we live in the midst of the pagan culture of today, embrace with fervor this ascetic life to which we are called, as a counter-cultural witness to the glory of the heavenly Bride of Christ.



Saint Cyprian of Carthage

Council News

Current council members and officers are:

Judith M. Stegman, President, 2013 – 2015; Diocese of Lansing

Magalis Aguilera, Member-at-large, 2013 – 2015 (appointed **Vice-President** thru 2015); Archdiocese of Miami

Nicole Bettini, Treasurer, 2011 – 2013; Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Mary Kay Lacke, Member-at-large, 2011-2013 (appointed **Secretary** through 2013), Diocese of Steubenville

Florence Sundberg, Member-at-large, 2012-2014, Archdiocese of Hartford

Team Announcements:

It's Finally in the Works! - **Vickie Hamilton**

Consecrated Virgins "Family" Scrapbook (update): Note the change from album to scrapbook. I am currently working on the actual scrapbook and hope to have the first pass done in time for the convocation next year. Our plan is to have an actual scrapbook that will be available at our official functions. Eventually, I would like to put together a virtual version of the scrapbook in the restricted section of the USACV archives. We are also planning on putting a subset of the scrapbook on the website in a place available to visitors. In the case of any material that ends up on-line, all personally identifiable information will be removed.

I have material from about 25 virgins that I have culled from the official USACV archives. In the next edition of Monday Morning Mail, I'll list those from whom I have information, so that no one is surprised. I will also be contacting each of these people to let you know what I have and to give each person the opportunity to opt out. For those of you who do not find yourself on the list but would like to participate and who may be allergic to having your picture taken (like me), items besides photographs are welcome, hence the change from "album" to "scrapbook."

Please send samples of your programs, invitations, photos, or any other consecration material for inclusion in our "family" scrapbook(s). I can scan what you send if you would like the originals back. Just let me know. If you have questions, please contact me. Send the material to **Vickie Hamilton**.

Upcoming events:

2014 National Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins

July 28-August 1, 2014

Malvern Retreat House

Malvern, PA

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

More information to follow!

2014 National Information Conference

August 5-August 8, 2014

Malvern Retreat House

Malvern, PA

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

More information to follow!

Special note regarding the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity for a Woman Living in the World. The English text of the *Rite of Consecration* was revised in 2012 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Vox Clara Committee. If you are planning a consecration, **please note that the Bishop should use the Rite of Consecration found in the 2012 edition of the Roman Pontifical.** The Congregation for Divine Worship does not grant permission for the Rite to be reproduced on websites, including the USACV website, so we continue to have the earlier translation of the Rite on the website. We are pursuing alternatives for publication of a study / ceremonial edition of the current *Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity for a Woman Living in the World*.

Two Reflections on Mary are included as a special addition to this issue of "The Lamp" on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During the 2013 Convocation, the consecrated virgins had so many opportunities to reflect together and pray together about Our Blessed Mother and her place in the life of consecrated virgins. Following are pieces on Our Lady, reflecting the fruit of lifetimes of devotion to Our Lady, by two consecrated virgins : Carmen M. Muñoz and Ann Stitt.



Consecration Anniversary Reflections

Consecrated virgins celebrating significant anniversaries are invited to offer a reflection on their years of living as a consecrated virgin. We're pleased to offer a few stories in this issue of "The Lamp," and will offer more in the December issue.

20 years:

Cathy Leahy, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, consecrated May 11, 1993:

In sharing the last 20 years of my experience of our beautiful vocation to Consecrated Virginity, I have chosen to do so in the spirit of my love of Ignatian spirituality. The gifts from God to all of humanity: memory, understanding and will. And our request to God: only Your love and Your grace, that is enough for me!

Memory:

-Of course the day of Consecration, May 11, 1993 comes to mind. I was consecrated with another sister in our beautiful parish church of St. Joseph.

-My favorite memory is our Bishop Hughes placing the ring on our finger, looking into his eyes was looking into the eyes of the Lord. "I am espoused to Him who the angels serve, sun and moon wonder at His glory."

-My companion for 20 years (12 years of consecration) who was a good friend, support and sister in the Lord, who chose to move in another direction. I will always be grateful for those years of working together for the sake of the Kingdom.

-My memory of visiting my mother who resided in a nursing home for 10 years. Being with her was my experience of being close to God. She was responsible for my faith and perseverance and was overjoyed at my decision to consecrate my life to Christ. In answer to prayers, Mom died on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11, 2012.

-My love for my consecrating Bishop who later became my "spiritual compass" and who urged me to move to West Virginia. He went home to God on Christmas Day 2012 at the age of 92.

Understanding:

- Believing that my vocation was given to me by Jesus Himself, seeing the gift in my past life, in my personality, in my desire to give 150%, in my experience of Jesus desiring me to offering my life for the purity of young women.

-Desiring to be consecrated in the Truth. My love for the truth in all circumstances. Coming to this conclusion with the help of the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. The beauty of discerning God's will in all things. Along with St. Catherine of Siena they have helped me to come closer to the truth, although of course, there is always a long way to go.

-My sense that God is asking me to intercede as a large part of my vocation. So much to pray for, even within the consecration ceremony, intercession is a prominent gift for us to use.

-I understand too that support is always a very

good thing. Fortunately, my decision to move to WV had a lot to do with the support that Jeanne McNulty is. Having another CV to pray, share, and serve with is truly a gift.

Will:

-Finally, we come to the greatest and most fragile gift of all.

-Giving my will to God has been the best gift of all. I know I don't live it perfectly, but I do desire to. He has given me beauty, comfort, security and love beyond my imagining.

-I pray to the Holy Spirit every morning to allow me to be attentive to the promptings He gives. This has given me a deeper prayer life, an abundance of grace to deal with every day affairs, which can be the most challenging, and an eternal perspective which I try to live, keeping our eyes fixed on the goal, Heaven.

*"Keep me O Lord, as the apple of Your eye,
hide me under your wings and keep me"*

10 years:

Kerry Celeste Hubata, Archdiocese of Chicago, consecrated August 1, 2003.

What joy to mark this, the 10th anniversary of my consecration! The day was observed by returning to Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago for Mass in the company of dear friends who were there on that day and who have always been there to support and pray for me.

There is a deep sense of gratitude for the Lord's love and for this undeserved gift. There is also deep gratitude to Francis Cardinal George, OMI at whose hands I received this tremendous grace. I had originally requested the consecration in 1976 but was told it wasn't being done in our age and that all I could do was make a private vow of virginity, which I did. My confessor at the time did not know that the consecration for a virgin living in the world had been reinstated. Indeed, the first consecration in our archdiocese did not take place until 2002.

The twenty-seven years between 1976 and my consecration in 2003 gave me plenty of time to think and to pray! For me as a dancer it was always obvious that one's body is one's instrument. Also obvious was that the body needed to be controlled, and more: offered. Offered in the service of something – Someone – higher. Even as a child, the words of St. Paul, "...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1) made me think of ballet class. It was there that I truly learned that discipline sets one free.

Many years later, a cloistered Carmelite nun, upon seeing a photo of me dancing, remarked, "Your body is an altar!" Yes, indeed. It is the place of sacrifice. Both as a dancer and as a consecrated virgin I have experienced the reality of that pain and that joy. Praise God!

More reflections page 11

from the President's journal . . .

Praised be Jesus Christ! The summer months have been busy and spiritually enriching for consecrated virgins, as we gathered both for our annual convocation and our annual information conference. In a particular way, I would like to thank Bishop Boyea for his presentations at the convocation that were directed so specifically to the lives of consecrated virgins, and for his enhanced discussion of the history of the vocation of consecrated virginity presented at the 2013 Information Conference. I especially commend CD's of these talks to readers of *The Lamp* – and this brings me to a piece of good news: an online store is now available through the USACV website, www.consecratedvirgins.org, so that you may order books and CD's online using a credit card. It sounds easy, but this is a long-awaited step forward for us!

We look forward to the 2014 Convocation and Information Conference being held in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. A team of virgins is beginning even now to prepare for the events, and you'll be hearing more details in the coming months. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is extending a most hearty welcome to us! I'll take this opportunity to also mention that according to our plan, the 2015 convocation will return to Chicago unless there is a proposal submitted soon to hold it in another location – even now, it is not too early to be considering a location for 2016.

The focus of attention of many of our virgins, under the guidance of [Mary Kay Lacke](#), is the preparation of additional volumes of our *Ordo Virginum* series. Volume One has been very well received. Volume Two, on discernment and formation for the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world, is underway, as is Volume Three, a volume on virgin saints, with a focus particularly on our Blessed Mother.

In response to inquiries about the inclusion of our personal reflections on various aspects of living a virginal life in today's world, I'd like to mention another volume we have planned for some point in the future: "Virgins Speak." We envision this volume as one that will round out the series by including the important personal dimension. It has been suggested that the volume be organized by themes, and that we glean both from new writings and from articles that may have appeared in earlier editions of *The Lamp*.

As I write this note, virgins around the world are encouraging one another to respond to our Holy Father's plea for prayers for world peace. May God have mercy upon us.

Judith Stegman

Report on 2013 information Conference

The 2013 USACV Information Conference was another instance of God's sovereign and merciful providence. Eighteen women attended the conference and, from their evaluations of their experience, they truly experienced the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their discernment of this vocation. Much personal sharing and discussion centered around four major topics: the spousal dimension of the vocation and how that informs the life of a consecrated virgin, the meaning of virginity as an integration of the whole life of a virgin, the significance of "living in the world," and the ecclesial dimension of the vocation, including the "public" nature of the vocation. As always, we were very blessed to have Bishop Boyea with us and treasured the time he took to share his wisdom. Various members of the team commented on his growing insight into the vocation of consecrated virginity over the years he has spent as our Episcopal Moderator. It is a great help to those who attend the conference.

I personally want to thank the Information Conference Team for their tireless dedication. Besides Bishop Boyea, I also thank [Theresa Marshall](#) for her gift of hospitality and wisdom in working with the conference participants as they decide to attend the conference and in serving them so graciously, once they arrive. I thank [Judith Stegman](#) for her diligence in presenting so clearly the significant dimensions of this vocation as they fit into the whole life of the Church and her ability to graciously yet firmly field the tough questions that come up about the true nature of the vocation. And I thank [Magalis Aguilera](#) not only for her faithful service in recording the proceedings but especially for the wisdom she brings from her twenty-seven years of total dedication to Our Lord through this beautiful vocation and from her background as a clinical psychologist. And finally, I want to thank [Karen Bussey](#) who always does such a beautiful job of explaining the Liturgy of the Hours to the group of attendees; she also is such a support as she carves out time from her busy schedule at Mother Teresa House to be present at the conference.

The team is looking forward to taking the conference on the road to Malvern, PA, in 2014. We have already started planning with personnel in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. [Theresa Marshall](#) and I are also planning a trip to Malvern to check out the space and the accommodations for the conference. May God be praised in all things! — [Mary Kay Lacke](#)

USACV Elections Notice Fall 2013

Two USACV Council positions, **Treasurer** and **At-Large Representative**, will open January 1, 2014. *We encourage members to consider running for these leadership positions in the association.* Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes and bylaws of the USACV, which are available upon request. Detailed descriptions of the terms, duties, and responsibilities of the Treasurer and At-Large Representative positions can be found in the June 2, 2013 issue of *The Lamp*.

Election Process

Written notification of a member's desire to run for either of the open Council positions must be received by the USACV President by midnight on Friday, October 25, 2013. We encourage each candidate to also submit a biographical statement (approx. 500 words), including remarks about why she desires to serve in the position and some information about her background and life as a consecrated virgin.

Ballots (and candidate biographies) will be mailed to all USACV voting members in early November 2013. A member is eligible to vote in an election if she has a consecration certificate on file with the USACV archivist and if she is registered as a USACV member in 2013. *If you have not yet registered as a member in 2013, now would be a good time to do so!*

Ballots will be due back to our Elections Team leader, **Paula Willenbrink**, by Friday, December 6, 2013. Ballots will be opened and counted in the presence of an independent party and notification of the results will be made to the USACV President, the newly elected, and all candidates. Results of the election will be announced in the December 12, 2013 issue of *The Lamp*.

Please do consider running for office, and encourage other members to run!

Consecration Announcements:

United States:

June 1, 2013, **Jennifer Cory Woodcox**, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, at the hands of The Most Reverend Michael J. Sheehan.

August 22, 2013, **Renee Fox**, Archdiocese of Seattle, at the hands of The Most Reverend Eusebio Elizando.

Upcoming Consecrations: (Please remember these virgins in prayer as they prepare for consecration!)

September 26, 2013 **Judy Peikert**, 2 pm in St. Paul's Cathedral, Diocese of Birmingham (Alabama), at the hands of Bishop Robert J. Baker. All are warmly welcome to attend! Bishop Baker is delighted to be celebrating this first consecration in his diocese. Contact Judy at srjudip@yahoo.com for more information.

October 26, 2013 **Theresa Prosser**, 10 am in the St. Vincent de Paul Chapel in the Cardinal Rigali Center, at the hands of Archbishop Robert J. Carlson. A reception with a light lunch will follow and all are welcome to attend. Contact Theresa at Theresa.Prosser@stlcp.edu for more information.

December 28, 2013 **Marie Beccaloni**, 10 am at St. John Cantius Parish, Archdiocese of Chicago at the hands of His Eminence Francis Cardinal George.

France:

June 9, 2013, **Nathalie Mayeras** and **Veronique Robin**, Cathedral of St. Andre in Bordeaux.

June 13, 2013, **Beatrice Pages**, at the hands of Bishop Francois Fonlupt, Bishop of Rodez.

Marie-Laetitia Calmen, Archdiocese of Paris.

Puerto Rico:

May 14, 2013, **Maria de los Angeles Ojeda-Meléndez**, Diocese of Caguas, Puerto Rico, at the hands of Bishop Rubén A. González Medina, CMF. *See photo.*



Reflections on the 2013 Convocation

Pauline Garland, Archdiocese of Sydney, Australia

What makes our time together as Consecrated Virgins so special? We pray, reflect, listen to instructions, share and have social time together.

However it is the grace of being together, sharing the same call, the same special love of Our Spouse and the gifts in our lives. The variety of our backgrounds, our working lives and our birth place melt into a variety of these gifts, all blending together to form a oneness and beauty of a body of a special assembly of women united in the Spirit as brides of Christ.

It is a special union and a special time together, a special sharing, a deep renewal, an expanding and encouragement of one another where there is a special bond uniting and upbuilding one another while defusing grace, love and beauty.

Kerry Hubata, Archdiocese of Chicago:

The convocation once again was a wonderful opportunity, even on my teaching schedule, to connect with my "sisters" and to be on the receiving end of those meaty talks. Great inspiration; great affirmation.

Mary Kay Lacke, Diocese of Steubenville:

When attendees at the 2012 convocation met on Sunday morning of the convocation to reflect on the convocation and to discuss a possible theme for the 2013 conference, I think that there was a real inspiration in the suggestion to focus on spiritual motherhood as consecrated virgins and to especially see our relationship with Our Lady as our spiritual mother. The fruit of that inspiration was evident at the 2013 convocation. My experience of the convocation was the experience of grace being poured out that empowered those attending the convocation to deepen their relationship with Our Mother and with each other as spiritual mothers as well as sisters in Our Divine Spouse. I personally continue to deepen in the grace I experienced at the convocation. Sometimes when I am so edified by a conference or an outstanding talk, the memory of it will influence me for awhile; but then in the midst of life's circumstances, it will fade. The opposite experience has been the case for the 2013 convocation. I am finding that I continue to deepen in the knowledge and appreciation of Our Lady's role in my life. My relationship with her just keeps on strengthening. It is all pure grace! I am so grateful!

The content of the talks and homilies for the convocation was so very inspiring. I am very grateful to Bishop Boyea for his breaking open the Word of the Gospels concerning Mary and his connection of those scriptures with our life as consecrated virgins. How rich were his presentations! He set the pace for the other presentations but God supplied the grace for them to bear fruit. This fruit was evident in the depth of our sharing together as sisters in the Lord. I was moved not only by our prayer together, especially the Sacred Liturgy, but also our heartfelt conversations

and discussions, our personal ministry to each other and our times of social activities. For me, all of these events were touched by Our Lady's presence. Since the convocation, I am so much more keenly aware of how her "Fiat" continues to impact every dimension of our lives...leading me to ongoing repentance and deeper conversion in taking on the mind of Our Divine Spouse. May God be praised in all things!

Loretta Matulich, Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon:

It is always a joy to be able to visit with old friends at the convocation and to meet new faces and be able to put names to faces now. I appreciated especially the efforts made by our three overseas/neighboring visitors (from Australia, U.K., and Canada).

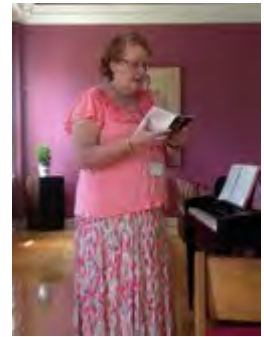
The responses I've gotten so far regarding our little personal sacred history project are wonderful! **Ann Stitt** really made an excellent suggestion when she asked for all of us consecrated virgins to write up something about our introduction to consecrated virginity through the actual Mass of Consecration. Each personal history is unique and illustrates God's powerful graces. I have tried to contact all the consecrated virgins for whom I have an email or postal address. If someone has not received an invitation from me yet, please let me know. The deadline for the little write-up is the end of September. God bless you all.

Ginnie Meyer, Archdiocese of Chicago:

The 2013 National Convocation of Consecrated Virgins in Mundelein was an especially joyful experience for me. Although I attended the 2012 Convocation, this year I was an official consecrated virgin. The time to pray together at Mass and in the Liturgy of the Hours brought a feeling of closeness to my sisters in Christ. The fellowship of sharing meals and conversation brought a sense of real belonging and family. The trip to Marytown and the evenings of singing, watching the movie *Maria Goretti* and eating and feasting on evening snacks made for an evening of fun!

Because I was unable to get off work, it was necessary for me to commute back and forth each day. Thus, I missed the speakers but was able to purchase copies and very much enjoyed listening to the CDs in my car on my eight and a half hour drive to Ohio (each way) for my dance studio reunion. The first CD that I just had to listen to was Sister Joan McGlinchey (who had been my mentor and advisor during the consecration process) entitled, "How Consecrated Women Express Spiritual Maternity" It was excellent!. A favorite was Bishop Boyea's presentation on how Christ asks consecrated virgins to bear Himself into the world.

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Convocation Photos 2013



Convocation Reflections continued

I feel so blessed to be a part of the Consecrated Virgins Living in the World. I praise the Lord and ask that I may too be able to show the spiritual maternity of the Church in my life as a consecrated virgin.

Ann Stitt, Archdiocese of Boston:

As one who has attended the USACV gatherings and convocations since 1997, with a gap (2004-2011) in the middle of these past 16 years, I can testify that each year is better than the last! And this year's, last year's, and next year's themes seem to be all of a piece: the prayer and consideration of Espousal, of Spiritual Maternity, and (it looks like from our discussion) The Son of God, Son of Man, each leading to the other, in a Trinitarian way. Our vocation as consecrated virgins is to be fruitful – "It is important," as our Holy Father told us (May 8, 2013, to Superiors General), pointing to the fruitfulness of consecrated life.

How do we know? – Sometime, we cannot see what God does in us and through us – we are mothers, how do we generate good fruit? Jesus says, "By their fruits you shall know them," and we remember the twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit, beginning with Peace and Joy, as first fruits. We get tiny glimpses, sometimes, of the great abundance and tremendous graciousness of God, and when we can say that we truly are peaceful even when faced with difficult or negative things, we can recognize that this is God's work, His gift. Where we can say we are really joy-full even in times of pain and suffering, again we can recognize that this is God working in us, giving us His own strength and light and God Love. Our awareness of the Holy Spirit and His Gifts and Fruits, grows!

So, when I come to the Convocation each year – and I praise God for this – I see so much of these workings and giftings of the Holy Spirit, and I learn so much more, from Him Who is Infinite, from my lovely and loving sisters-in-Christ. What do I see, but more of His "Divine Courtesie" (St. Francis de Sales' expression) and gracious mercy, His gentle Power, the Light that goes beyond reason yet always is compatible with reason, His tremendous yet delicate Love. This year's request of thought and of prayers has been a fruit that continues even after we depart, even as I resume usual routine, for in Faith, one never stops growing!

I was delighted to hear Sister Joan McGlinchey's talk, for we most certainly do share much with all Religious, even though we ourselves are not Sisters, we are all consecrated women, we are all brides of Christ. It was very good to hear her speak, for how else can we learn our commonality and unity in Christ our Beloved?

Florence Sundberg, Archdiocese of Hartford:

What struck me most about our convocation in July was the spirit of joy and gladness among us and the enthusiastic sharing among those who gathered to walk or take meals together and during our general

meetings. Praying together was, as usual, a beautiful, enriching experience. Bishop Boyea spoke about our call to be on the lookout for the needs of others, those near and far, nationally and internationally and to ask the Lord, our Spouse, after recognizing those needs, how we may be called to respond. This carried over into our discussion about the possible theme for our next convocation in Philadelphia: how do we live our call as consecrated virgins living in the world, in particular living in the American culture which is becoming more and more secularized, almost paganized? We considered how Mary lived and served in her culture, in her time and how we may take her as our role model.

It is always such a joy to come together, to share and to encourage one another. One of our sisters spoke of how grateful she is to be able to come to our convocations and be able to share with other consecrated virgins who understand her in a way that others cannot because they live this vocation. At one moment, it almost seemed to be like the 'upper room' where the disciples of the Lord were gathered together with Mary when the Holy Spirit came down upon them and prepared and equipped them for their mission – in the world.

I felt inspired by my sisters and better prepared to return home and to move more deeply into those places and situations the Lord is calling me to. Working with Mitzi to prepare an evening of song was wonderful; Mitzi has a great and loving heart and inserts a splash of joy whenever she is present. I am grateful, deeply grateful, to the Lord and to all my sisters in Christ.



Anniversary Reflections continued

5 years:

Kathy Reda, Archdiocese of Boston, consecrated August 15, 2008.

My Consecration was on the Feast of the Assumption at 6pm in the evening. It was pouring raining outside and the church was filled inside. Hundreds came to see what this Consecration of a Perpetual Virgin was! Cardinal Sean O'Malley was the main celebrant and I had a bishop and 12 priests in attendance. My family, friends, parish and co-workers all were there and marveled at the holiness of the Mass and many commented how happy I looked. Many of them did not see me slip on the wet floor heading down to start the procession?! As I started down the enormously long aisle, I was so nervous all these people looking at me, a friend from work, a wise faith-filled woman, grabbed my hand and told me to just keep my eyes on Jesus. Well from that minute on that is what I have done.

All the nervousness left me, it was a beautiful Mass and I began my life as a bride of Christ. In the Liturgy of the Hours, Thursday night prayer starts with Psalm 16, it says "preserve me, Lord, I put my hope in you. I have said to The Lord "you are my God and my happiness lies in you alone". I love these words and I believe he has called me to be his beloved and I will always find my happiness in Him. He is the first person I talk with every morning and the last person I talk with at night. I am a nurse and I try to speak about Jesus to people at work, I pray with patients and co-workers, at first some were timid about asking me, but now they call me to come to any patient's room!

There is a beautiful song by Matt Maher called "Jesus My Everything", it sums up my life and I love the words, I had it played at my consecration. "Holiness is calling me so take me as I am, you are my everything, you are the song I sing; I'll do anything for you. Teach me how to pray to live a life of grace, I'll go anywhere with you. Jesus be my everything."

Jesus has led me to many places in the 5 years I have

been his bride. I love him, I hope to always grow in deeper love and understanding of His great love and mercy and spread His message to as many people as I can.

Alma Bella Solis, Archdiocese of Boston, consecrated August 2, 2008

As I begin my 6th year as a consecrated virgin living in the world, I am effusively grateful to Almighty God for His graces and blessings given me though unworthy as I am. Our Blessed Mother relentlessly protects and guides me in everything that I do. In every need, family and wonderful friends, old and new are in abundance to assist me. It is God's hand. Teaching advanced art courses to children and adults had been my passion and joy as a full-time self-employed art instructor. So much beauty I see around inside the classroom as students were dedicated and enthusiastic rendering their quality fine art pieces. Whenever I teach Religious Education to first graders on Sunday mornings (now on 13th year), I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit as the 6-year olds attempted to respond to questions on God, faith, verses of the holy Bible, and Christian living.

Three months prior to my solemn public consecration ceremony, an old friend of mine asked me a question, "Alma, what will be the changes when you are consecrated?" My response was – There shall not be much change with the way I live, but significant change due to receiving the consecration from the Church. My reasons: My consecration is my happiness, the purest joy of my existence in this world. My consecration will mark my union with God. My consecration will empower my intent of pure discipleship to Christ. My consecration symbolizes my unity with the Church who is the Bride of Christ. My consecration promises my perpetual commitment to holiness and sanctity of life. My consecration is my strength to continued solitude, quietude, contemplation, prayer. My consecration will consume my whole being into the Kingdom of God.

TIDBITS:



Cathy Maley, consecrated virgin from St. Louis, together with Mary Moore of Columbia, Missouri and Theresa Prosser, whose consecration is scheduled in October, visited with Cardinal Burke during a pilgrimage day to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.



Consecrated virgins **Carol Stronach** (Newark, NJ), **Anne Marie Sweeney** (Newark), **Barbara Blumers** (New York City), and **Aliceanne Sawyer** (Trenton, NJ) gathered for lunch on June 27. The person dressed in black is Paula Korner, the hostess, who evidently kept them all entertained!

Reflection on Mary, Our Blessed Mother

By Ann Stitt,
Consecrated Virgin

Mary was a stranger to me during my growing-up years because I wasn't brought up Catholic. When I signed up for an introductory correspondence course in the Catholic religion at age nineteen, I recall querying the "how" of the Virgin Birth and getting the still-puzzling answer that parturition took place as with any birth, except that Jesus' birth was without pain for His mother, for she was conceived without sin. A bit later on, having received the gift of faith and the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, I was enchanted by Luiz Martinez's description of that very first time Mary and her Son looked into each other's eyes. Having lost my own mother when I was seventeen, I began to realize that Mary is my Mother – as she has always been!

I was at times put off by religious schmuck, turquoise-blue clothes and drippy sentimentality and over-emphasis on visions; but people like St. Catherine of Siena and St. Louis de Monfort and Blessed John Paul II showed me who Our Lady is. St. Francis of Assisi's "Salutations to Mary" are full of his profound prayer and great respect towards her. Caryll Houselander's *THE REED OF GOD* helped me understand who Mary is: "bringer of peace," "fertile ground in whom the Word was sown." *THE WOMAN WRAPPED IN SILENCE* (John W. Lynch,) the song, "Gentle Woman" (Carey Landry) and the works of St. Louis de Monfort all helped so much to let me know our Blessed Mother in a personal and loving way. The icons and the rosary became part of my life, my prayers and my devotion to her.

Having received the Consecration (as a Virgin,) I began to call Mary – without being at all flippant – my "mother-in-law," Jesus being

my Spouse and I His bride. I have a simple little prayer that says it all: *Jesus, show me Your mother. Mary, show me your Son.* Other prayers to her I also use: *Sub tuum praesidium, Salve Regina, Salve Mater, Stabat Mater, Ave Maria, Immaculate Mary* – prayer and song become one. Pope Francis' loving devotion to Mary is contagious!

In Europe, as I traveled, I saw abundant evidence of the affection for Mary even in this secularized world. How nice to see a picture of Mary in the compartment on the train! And everywhere, art and architecture spoke silently, eloquently of her. Our own country is very young, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. (In the Eastern Church, December 8 is the Feast of Joachim and Anne.) More recently, the whole Western Hemisphere has been put under the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas. She is always interceding for us – even when we don't know her, as was my case. Mary is always bring us her Son, quietly, gently, unobtrusively, yet very powerfully! Her Son is our Savior and she is mother to the Body of Christ, His Church: "Woman, behold your son." These words, addressed to her, and the words spoken to John from the Cross, are for us all!

The nuptial quality of Mary's becoming the Mother of her Son by the Holy Spirit is reflected in the most real way when we receive Holy Communion and make our thanksgiving after Mass – the closest we are to God, this side of Heaven: *Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* He is Present within us by faith, actually, physically, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually – fully, completely. The Living, Active Word of God comes to us, brought by Mother Church in the Mass, every time we hear that Word and partake, eat and drink that Word become flesh. We become bearers of that Word, bringing Him

to others, bringing others to Him. What Christ gives us, we give to others – His Good News – sharing the Word with one another, reflecting and pointing to Our Lord and His Mother. This is evangelizing: *See, I make all things new! The Spirit and the Bride say, Come!* This is why the Church is here.

Appendix: "The Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary"

By St. Francis of Assisi

A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**Hail, O Lady, Holy Queen,
Mary, holy Mother of God,
Who are the Virgin made Church,
chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven
whom he consecrated with
His most holy beloved Son
and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete,
in whom there was and is
all fullness of grace and
every good.
Hail His Palace!
Hail His Tabernacle!
Hail His Dwelling!
Hail His Robe!
Hail His Servant!
Hail His Mother!
And hail all You holy virtues which are poured
into the hearts of the faithful through the grace
and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, that from being
unbelievers,
You may make them faithful
to God.**

Reflection on Mary by **Carmen M. Muñoz,** consecrated virgin

The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary marks an important historical event in the beginning of Catholic Faith in the USA. On September 8, 1565, 448 years ago, a group of the early Catholic settlers and colonists came ashore to a land they had named St Augustine since they had sighted it from the sea on August 28, 1565.

After landing and singing the *Te Deum*, the Holy Eucharist of the Mass was celebrated by a Spanish Catholic priest, Fr. Grajales. It was the beginning of “the oldest permanently occupied European settlement in what is now the United States of America, and what would be ...America’s First Parish”.¹ With the Faith, another very important Gift that these newcomers brought to stay was the devotion to the Mother of God. By the early 1600s on the ground of Mission *Nombre de Dios* they had built a small chapel and placed there an image of *María Santísima de la Leche*, [“Most Holy Virgin of the Milk” or “Our Lady of La Leche, the Nursing Mother”] which was venerated both by settlers and by natives that had been baptized. It is, thus, the oldest Marian shrine dedicated to the Mother of God in North America.²

The Virgin Mary Mother of Jesus has been venerated since antiquity as the Nursing Mother who by her total Fiat “conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ...and cooperated “by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior’s work of restoring supernatural life to souls” (LG, 61). St. Ephrem, the “Harp of the Holy Spirit”, wrote:

The Virgin Mary gives birth to Her Son and remains a virgin, she breastfeeds the One that gives nourishment to the nations, and in her chaste lap holds the One that keeps the universe. She is Virgin and Mother, what is She not? Holy in body, a completely beautiful soul, pure in Spirit, sincere intelligence, perfect in her feelings, chaste, faithful, pure-

hearted, loyal, she has all the virtues.....³

St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) was a staunch defender of the Perpetual Virginity and purity of the Divine Motherhood of Christ, the Word made flesh. She is the Mother of the Word Incarnate and the Mother of the Eucharist. In his Treatise on Sacred Virginity, he presents Mary as a model for Christian virgins consecrated to God and assures:

There is, therefore, no reason why the virgins of God be sad, because themselves also cannot, keeping their virginity, be mothers of the flesh. For Him alone could virginity give birth to with fitting propriety, Who in His Birth could have no peer. However, That Birth of the Holy Virgin is the ornament of all holy virgins; and themselves together with Mary are mothers of Christ, if they do the will of His Father. ...(cf. Ch 5-6)

Our Lady of La Leche is a tender devotion that highlights not only this active participation of the Virgin Mary in the human motherhood of Christ (cf. RM, 7, 22) but also the spiritual motherhood to which consecrated virgins are called by virtue of their consecration to “follow Christ in a life of perfect chastity” (cf. Rite) as brides of Christ. By her fidelity to the will of God, the Immaculate Virgin Mary Mother of God is not only a role model for married women and mothers to be, but She is also the most excellent and supreme model for all consecrated virgins and every woman consecrated to Christ who want to live faithfully, as Bl. Pope John Paul II said, their “Motherhood according to the spirit” (MD,21). And She is forever our mother “in the order of grace” (LG,61), a maternity that flows from her Divine Motherhood. We have been reminded by Pope Francis that every consecrated woman must be a “spiritual mother” by living a “fruitful chastity”.⁴

In nourishing her Divine son the Child Jesus from her own self, she mystically nourishes all of us also when we partake of the Body and Blood of her Son. A poem by St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Doctor of the Church and co-Patroness of the

Missions, expresses with beauty, simplicity, and tenderness this Theology of the virginal Milk of Mary and the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The following few stanzas of *The Divine Dew*, or *The Virginal Milk of Mary*⁵ written in 1893 reveal the treasure of the meaning hidden in this Marian devotion:

My beloved, my divine little

Brother,

In your gaze I see all the future.

Soon, for me, you will leave your Mother.

Already love impels you to suffer,

But on the cross, O Full-blossomed Flower!

I recognize your morning fragrance.

I recognize Mary’s Dew.

Your divine blood is Virginal Milk!...

The seraphim feeds on glory.

In Paradise his joy is full.

Weak child that I am, I only see in the ciborium

The color and figure of Milk.

But that is the Milk a child needs,

And Jesus’ Love is beyond compare.

O tender Love! Unfathomable power,

My white Host is Virginal Milk!...

Mary is a model for all who strive to do the will of God in their lives. She, *the humble Woman of Nazareth*, as the most “pre-eminent and singular member of the Church” (LG, 53), was chosen from eternity to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word and, thus, the Mother of our Eucharistic Lord, our Savior and Spouse. By her fidelity, “*Mary became not only the “nursing mother” of the Son of Man but also the “associate of unique nobility” of the Messiah and Redeemer*” (RM, 39; cf. LG, 61), and a sure way for us to live our Baptismal commitment to follow Christ in His footsteps.

Like in those earlier days of the nascent America, the Mother of the Lord, the Incarnate Word, is the

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shining star in the New Evangelization today guiding and nurturing the "Culture of Life". May the Most Holy Virgin of La Leche, who has also been called "Mother of Life" help all who invoke her to grow in her love and in her Son's love; to be nourished with His Word and His Eucharistic Body and Blood as He was nourished by her Virginal Milk; and obtain for each person the grace to be transformed in other Marys so that, as St. Ambrose

"May the soul of Mary be in each one of us to glorify the Lord! May the spirit of Mary be in each one of us to rejoice in God!" Her spirit in us will surely lead us always to love God and, as her Divine Son, the Bridegroom of the Church commanded, to love one another as He has loved us. For in this we will be known to be His disciples and His "mother and sister and bride" (cf Jn 15:12).

¹<http://www.thefirstparish.org/History.html>

²Cf. "First Mass Remembered" www.staugcatholic.org/article.asp?ArticleID=854

³St. Ephrem, 4th Century Doctor of the Church. **Hymn to the Blessed Virgin Mary.** (Quoted in full in Spanish by Fr. Vizmanos, SJ, in his book "Virgenes Cristianas de la Iglesia Primitiva" Part II, Ch.15, 382-383) Theologian and Hymnographer, wrote beautiful hymns dedicated to the Mother of God, her virginity, purity, and both her divine and her spiritual Motherhood.

⁴Cf. Address to Consecrated Woman, May 8, 2013

5. Poetry of St. Therese of Lisieux.

Life Corner

By Florence
Sundberg



We have seen and heard much about the atrocious acts committed against preborn human babies; we have seen those in high places defend these atrocities. We have also seen many stand up for the unique, inestimable

value of each and every human life, often at great cost to themselves. One woman who inspires me is Mary Wagner who has been arrested often for peacefully standing up for the lives of these pre-born babies. Even in prison, Mary stands strong and firm in witness to the sacredness of life – all life, and, by her loving witness, has changed the hearts of many. Now I ask myself, as we all must, how far I am willing to go to witness to the sacredness of life, to stand with the Lord Jesus and defend His little ones, to be their voice, His voice? I wish I knew but I don't; I pray I will be at least as loving and as courageous as Mary Wagner and not count the cost as long as even one of God's little one's lives will be saved."



Mosaic (partially depicted here) of the 12th century façade of the Roman basilica Santa Maria in Trastevere, the oldest Roman church dedicated to the Mother of God. Ten virgins carrying their lamps flank the Mother of God nursing her Child, Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church. (photo courtesy of Google)

