

The Lamp

Volume 22, Issue 2 — May 31, 2017

United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

SERVING THE VOCATION OF CONSECRATED VIRGINITY

USACV

www.consecratedvirgins.org

May 31, 2017 *Feast of the Visitation*

To the Members of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins,

Archbishop Blair of Hartford and I traveled to Portugal a few years ago and drove up to Fatima. It was not on the 13th of the month and thus the town was quite deserted. We celebrated Mass in the large Basilica and spent a good amount of time simply in quiet prayer with very few people around.

To make such a pilgrimage to Fatima had been on my bucket list for a long time. However, I must say making such a spiritual journey without the presence of a large group of the Body of Christ was a bit strange. It felt like I was constantly waiting for something to happen which was not going to happen, as though I was out of place, certainly out of time.

Yet, nearby is an outdoor Stations of the Cross and I made these being very conscious that I was walking with the Lord and that Mary was, as it were, just behind me urging me on. The serenity of the place and time was thus gathered into my prayer as I walked from station to station.

Mary's visitations to the poor are always a gift of God's great love for his people. These visits are also signs that in the ordinary, daily activities of our lives she is a loving Mother who cares for us. This was brought home to me in those days at Fatima. There was little that was extraordinary since there were no big celebrations or processions, but it is in the daily walk of life that Mary loves us as a Mother and continues to urge us on to follow her Son and to do whatever he tells us.

I pray that this 100th anniversary of Mary's visitation at Fatima will be a time of renewal for all of us as we serve the Lord and his people on the 13th day of each month as well as on all the other days of this year.



Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing

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By Magalis Aguilera and Judith Stegman

I hope in the LORD, I trust in his word; with him there is kindness and plenteous redemption (see Ps. 130: 7). "It is God who is active within us, giving us both the will and the achievement, in accordance with his good purpose. Through his Spirit, God also reveals his wisdom in the plan he has preordained for our glory" (from a homily by Saint Basil the Great, bishop).¹

Mary of Nazareth was visited in her home town by an angel sent by the Eternal Father to make known His will for her in accord with His Eternal purpose. The plan had begun with that first human failure in Paradise, and was to be fulfilled in the plenitude of time: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4).

Mary may not yet have fully understood the meaning of the heavenly message and how maternity might be reconciled with her *propositum* of virginity, but clinging to the first words of the angel and trusting the Omnipotence of God she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word" (Lk. 1:38). With her *fiat*, she fulfilled her *propositum* to integrate her virginity with fulfilling the Eternal Father's will for her. The Holy Spirit sealed in her being that will: "Therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God" (Lk. 1:31). She began her mission as the one chosen for the mission of the Son of the Eternal Father when she visited her cousin Elizabeth; she was an instrument who manifested the Word of God as John, the precursor of Jesus Christ, was sanctified by her words of greeting while still in the womb of his mother. Mary sang her *Magnificat*, a canticle long sung by women before her who had been called to prepare the way of the Lord, but Mary, moved by the Holy Spirit, added the words: "...henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

Ever since this time of the Visitation with her cousin and the sanctification of John the Baptist, and continuing until the second coming of our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, we contemplate our Blessed Mother as one chosen by the Eternal Father to inspire and to move "all generations."

Mary was the inspiration of the first virgins of the early Church. Her *propositum* resounded in their souls with the power of the Holy Spirit; they gave up everything to keep the integrity of their virginity and to request consecration from the Bishops of the Church. Saint Ambrose recalled Pope Liberius speaking of Mary at the consecration of his sister, Marcelina: "Mary, raising for the honor of Christ, the labarum (banner) of integral virginity."² The history of the consecration of Saint Marcelina yields a treasure in the words of her *propositum*: "I renounce your works, oh Satan! I renounce the pomp of this century and its seductions; I promise to lessen my flesh in your service, and make a *propositum* and swear that, even when offered any human enticement, which I declare I don't desire, I will remain uncontaminated and virgin, bride of Christ forever. In Latin: *Renuntio tibi, diabole, et saeculo tuo et pompae tuae et operibus tuis: serva foedus quod pepigisti et esto consentiens pactumque custodiens cum adversario tuo dum es in via huius saeculi, incontaminata virgum, Sponsa Christi, perseverare.*"³

The Blessed Virgin Mary continues to fulfill the mission given her in the will of the Eternal Father. The Holy Spirit moves persons to conversion. Mary is the woman whom all generations will call blessed, and she has come to us at three important times. In Fatima, she was sent by the Eternal Father to alert the Church about the profound need for the world to move from sinful lives to conversion. Love and conversion are inseparable in her message, and in order to love, human beings need a process of conversion lasting until eternity.

During 2017, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of our Blessed Mother's visit to us at Fatima: in the mystical place of our souls and in the concrete place of the Church through her three children: Lucia, Jacinta, and

¹ Office of Readings, Monday, Third Week of Lent.

² Saint Ambrose, *De institutione virginis et Sanctae Marie perpetua virginitate* in Francisco de B. Vizmanos, *Las vírgenes cristianas de la Iglesia primitiva*, p. 185.

³ Vizmanos, p. 186.

Francisco. She has asked all of us for conversion and reparation for offenses committed against the will of the Eternal Father: "Do not offend the Lord our God anymore, because He is already so much offended."

She spoke about the Word of the Eternal Father manifested to us in Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life. She spoke with words understandable to those chosen children about the erratic transformation that the world was undergoing with its customs, luxuries, divisions, and orgies disguised as dance, unfaithfulness to the teachings of her Son, and the deviation of people's lives from the will of the Eternal Father. She spoke about conversion of this world to the Word of God, and she included in her warnings those who call themselves Christians and those who exercise a pastoral office in the Church of her Son. She issued an alert, "If the world is not converted, if Russia is not converted the Church will be persecuted." When she spoke about the conversion of Russia, she spoke about a country that had promoted the materialist interpretation of human history, and which explicitly rejected the existence of an eternal life to come. Russia's conversion referred to a matter of wider scope than the nation of Russia itself; both Russia and the world were the focus of the message of our Mother.

Our Blessed Mother's mission in Fatima is not over, because we continue in confusion about the truths of her divine Son. She warned that Russia would extend her dominion throughout the world. This dominion does not simply refer to the political, but refers to atheism, indifference about God's will, and the confusion of those who say that faith in the Word of God is only an opium for the human being that is meant to keep him in ignorance. What they name "ignorance" refers to a fake notion of the wisdom of liberty that comes because we are children of God. Their "liberty" has another philosophical interpretation as collectivism. The warning that comes from our Mother's visit in Fatima is that we must be alert not to allow the one truth of our divine Lord Jesus Christ to be deviated into the "truth" of each person following their own "truth."

The erratic re-interpretation in history of the meaning of our being as children of God has expanded throughout the world, not with an explicit war, but by an implicit deviation in what we understand as goods — that is — family goods, the dignity of human life, and free will. Mary's warning is not so distant from us today, as we look around at our daily experiences, our families, and our neighborhoods. In 1976, just two years before he became Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla spoke prophetically in Philadelphia of the world situation.

"We are standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through. I do not think that wide circles of American society or wide circles of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel versus the anti-Gospel."⁴

This is the meaning of the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart: conversion from atheism's philosophy of materialism can happen within her Immaculate Heart. Her heart, created immaculate by God, comes forth in total love from the Holy Trinity, in her dignity as Mother and Virgin of the Church and in her queenship over all creation. The mission of our Mother in Fatima was to seek conversion: the eternal Father sent her to Portugal for the conversion of souls. When Mary was sent to Mexico, she came to comfort the suffering people and to request a place to join them in their prayers, a place where she could show her maternal care. When our Lady visited Lourdes in France, she came to provide a source of integral healing. Her mission has been fulfilled in those places, but her mission in Fatima continues in process because she asked for the conversion of the world from its sinful life, and the world has not yet truly listened and followed her message. We do not lose hope, however, for she assured the children that in the end the work of her mission would be fulfilled: "In the end My Immaculate Heart will triumph."

In our virginal consecration, let us join our Mother in prayers of reparation. Let us find courage in the words of St. Basil the Great, "through his Spirit, God also reveals his wisdom in the plan he has preordained for our glory." Let us say with the Psalmist: "I hope in the LORD, I trust in his word; with him there is kindness and plenteous redemption."

⁴ From a talk by Fr. Linus Clovis, reported in LifeSite News, May 18, 2017. See www.lifesitenews.com.

By Judith Stegman

It has been a joy for me to compose portions of the text of the forthcoming book, *Discernment and Formation for the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*. We are hopeful for publication in early fall 2017 of this second volume of the USACV Series: *Ordo Virginum: The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Virgins in the Catholic Church*. Volume Two is meant to provide bishops and those assisting them, as well as those seeking the consecration of virgins, with a deeper understanding of essential elements of the *Ordo virginum* in order to assist discernment and formation for this distinct vocation in the Catholic Church.

All consecrated virgins celebrate an important anniversary each year on the Feast of the Visitation. It was on May 31, 1970 that the rite of consecration to a life of virginity was revised in accord with the decree of the Second Vatican Council (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 80). Pope Saint John Paul II later noted

that on that date in 1970 not only was a liturgical rite revised, but also the *Ordo virginum* itself was reinstated (John Paul II, “May Christ be Your Total and Exclusive Love,” June 2, 1995 in the English Weekly Edition of *L’Osservatore Romano*, n.24, June 14, 1995). We give thanks to our Divine Spouse for his many graces, and continue to follow the lead of John Paul II as we refer to the *revision* of the liturgical rite of consecration and the *restoration* of the *Ordo virginum* on the Feast of the Visitation in 1970.

In March of 2017, I had the opportunity to present two breakout sessions on the vocation of consecrated virginity during the 2017 annual assembly of the National Conference of Vicars for Religious. Important discussions were held concerning the history and distinguishing features of the vocation of consecrated virginity vis-à-vis the history and features of other forms of consecrated life. I often have email contact with diocesan delegates for consecrated life, and it was a joy to be with them in person.

Shannon Ryan Invites Us to Our Lady of Fatima Parish, in Albuquerque, New Mexico



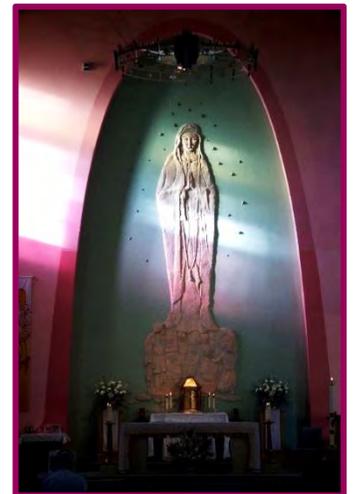
Shannon Ryan opens the door to her parish Church, inviting us all in.

Photos courtesy of Shannon's sister

Shannon Ryan invites us all to a wonderful centenary celebration of Our Lady of Fatima, “as my parish, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is named after Fatima. The church was one of the first in the nation to be designated as such, only 30 years after the 1917 apparitions. So, we celebrated in grand style with Vespers and a wonderful sacred music concert the night before. Then a joyous procession and Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Emeritus Michael Sheehan and 14 other local priests.” (The procession included 3 young children dressed as the seers.)



Children dressed as the seers of Fatima join the procession.



Enter the Church, and you see Our Lady of Fatima presiding over the main altar.

USACV Council

Members and Officers

Judith M. Stegman, President, 2016-2018;
Diocese of Lansing.

Magalis Aguilera, Member-at-large, 2016-
2018 (Appointed Vice-President through
2018);
Archdiocese of Miami.

Margaret Flipp, Treasurer, 2017-2019;
Diocese of Arlington.

Marie Beccaloni, Member-at-large, 2015-2017,
(Appointed Secretary through 2017);
Archdiocese of Chicago.

Linda Ann Long, Member-at-large,
2017-2019;
Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.



Upcoming Events Sponsored by the USACV

2017 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins
July 7-11, 2017

Pallottine Renewal Center, Florissant, Missouri
Archdiocese of St. Louis
(See article page 7)

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2017 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity
July 25-28, 2017

The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center,
Chicago, Illinois
(See article page 8)

Announcements and News

USACV Photo Albums:

We are in need of a consecrated virgin to take over a holy task for the USACV: maintaining our “family” albums, which contain photos and other memorabilia from virgins’ consecration ceremonies and maintaining our “convocations” album, which contains photos from the convocations over the years. This is a great opportunity for someone to serve the vocation of consecrated virginity. Please contact a council member if you are interested.

Recordings Available

Recordings from the 2016 Convocation and 2016 Information Conference are available in the store our USACV website.

Upcoming Issues of The Lamp:

September 8, 2017 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 8, 2017 Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

February 2, 2018 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

May 31, 2018 Feast of the Visitation



One USACV Council position, At-Large Representative, will open January 1, 2018. Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes and bylaws of the USACV, which have been mailed to all members and are available upon request. A summary of election information and position descriptions follow:

Election Process

Candidacy: Written notification of a member's desire to run for the open Council position must be received **by midnight on Friday, September 29, 2017**. We encourage each candidate to also submit a biographical statement (maximum 500 words), including remarks about her own life as a consecrated virgin, as well as her vision, qualifications, and motivation for serving in the position for which she desires to run.

Eligibility to Vote: A member is eligible to vote in the 2017 election if she has a consecration certificate on file with the USACV archivist and if she has registered as a USACV member in 2017 (Article III D 2). Ballots will be mailed in early November to those listed as registered members on **October 30, 2017**.

Voting Process: Ballots (and candidate biographies) will be mailed to eligible USACV members in early November 2017. Ballots will be due back to our Election Team leader by Friday, December 1, 2017. Further details of the election process will be announced in the September issue of *The Lamp*.

Election Results: The position of At-Large Representative will be won by the candidate receiving the most votes of the voting members (Article VI F). "Voting members" refers to the number of valid ballots that are returned (see Article XI).

Position Terms, Descriptions and Responsibilities

At Large Representative Term: January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2020.

Eligibility to run for office (Article III Section D3):

Open to any current voting member who has been a member or actively involved in the Association for for two previous years.

Duties (Article V Section A):

1. To collaborate with other council members in the governance of the USACV in accord with the provisions of the organizational statutes, with particular focus on the ecclesial objectives (Article II) of the Association.
2. To make every effort to attend the annual membership meeting and the annual council meeting held with the Episcopal Liaison. To participate in other council meetings or discussions as needed.
3. If serving as the council representative on a standing committee, to facilitate ongoing communication between the council and the committee.
4. If elected as an At-Large Representative, to make every effort to accept an appointment as Vice President (Article V Section C) or Secretary (Article V, Section D), recognizing that some responsibilities of the offices may be delegated to others (Article IV, Section A).

Other Notes

Council members rely heavily on email to facilitate communication, since we are geographically in all parts of the United States.

The Association's travel budget currently covers accommodations and meals for Council members during the annual Council meeting with our Episcopal Liaison, but not travel expenses.

Council members meet at least quarterly by telephone conference call.

Any current council members would be happy to discuss council positions with interested members.

2017 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, July 7-11



Pallottine Renewal Center Gardens

Please join United States consecrated virgins at the annual convocation to be held July 7-11 at Pallottine Renewal Center just outside St. Louis, Missouri. This year the convocation is themed “The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Virgins” and each day will address themes of ongoing formation, our Lady, and the communion of saints.

All consecrated virgins, including those from other countries, are warmly invited to attend. Virgins who have been accepted by their Bishops as candidates for the consecration are also invited to come if they have attended a previous Information Conference. Registration forms are now available on the USACV website: www.consecratedvirgins.org.

Our days together will be centered upon Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, adoration, and confession. The program will include formal presentations by Bishop Boyea, Father David Meconi, S.J., and several consecrated virgins. In addition to these conferences, there will be panel discussions on formation and spiritual direction. In response to requests from several virgins there will be greater time for discussion and fellowship built into the schedule.

The convocation will also include a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne in St. Charles, Missouri. This beautiful memorial to the French missionary of the Sacred Heart will be the setting of a Mass in the extraordinary form as well as tours for virgins interested in the shrine or St. Rose.

Once again, we encourage all consecrated virgins and candidates who have attended an Information Conference to join us for this wonderful time of study, prayer, and community at the 2017 Convocation. We hope to see you all in July!



Pallottine Renewal Center Chapel Florissant, Missouri

*2017 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity
Lived in the World*

Registration is now open for the 2017 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity, to be held July 25-28 at the Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center in downtown Chicago. Registration forms are available on the USACV website, www.consecratedvirgins.org. This conference is important for those women discerning a call to the life of consecrated virginity in order to develop an understanding of the vocation and to learn the necessary next steps in the process towards consecration, steps that will be taken under the guidance of their diocesan Bishop.

This conference is also helpful for those persons working with a virgin in the discernment process, especially their bishops, spiritual directors, diocesan vocation directors of consecrated life and consecrated virgins who may be assisting them in the discernment process.

Over the years that the USACV National Information Conference has been held, so very many consecrated virgins have shared how important and helpful the conferences were in their discernment process. The consecrated virgins themselves are the best encouragers of other women considering this vocation to attend the conference as a part of their discernment. The USACV is very grateful to Bishop Boyea, our Episcopal Liaison, for his thorough presentations on the history of the vocation, along with his availability to meet with the inquirers as well as with vocation directors and clergy who attend the conference on behalf of their dioceses.

Along with Bishop Boyea, a team of consecrated virgins give presentations on key dimensions of the life of consecrated virginity lived in the world: the content of the Rite of Consecration, the distinct spirituality of the consecrated virgin, the meaning of virginal chastity, the dimensions of “living in the world” and more. For more information, please see the Information Conference brochure and registration form, available on the USACV website. You may also contact the conference coordinator, consecrated virgin Theresa Marshall: tel. 734-332-4648 or marshallcv@gmail.com.



Photos are from Magalis Aguilera's Fatima prayer garden.

Consecration Announcements

United States:

February 2, 2017 Jennifer Lynn Settle, Archdiocese of Philadelphia, at the hands of the Most Reverend Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia.

February 11, 2017 Karen Paschke, Diocese of Madison, at the hands of the Most Reverend Robert Morlino, Bishop of Madison.

Cuba:

April 5, 2017 Yoandra Torres Freyre, Diocese of Holguin, at the hands of Bishop Emilio Aranguren Echeverria, Bishop of Holguin.

India:

April 23, 2017 Sylvia Rodrigues, Archdiocese of Bombay, at the hands of the Most Reverend Dominic Savio Fernandes.



Upcoming U. S. Consecrations

May 27, 2017 Elizabeth Rizzo at the hands of the Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans, 10:30am, Our Lady of the Rosary Church, New Orleans, Louisiana.

June 24, 2017 Karen Erwin, Theresa Anne Jordan, and Laurie Malashanko, at the hands of The Most Reverend Allen Vigneron, Archbishop of Detroit, at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, Detroit, Michigan.

August 22, 2017 Patricia Cordell at the hands of the Most Reverend Paul J. Swain, D.D, Bishop of Sioux Falls, 10:00 am in the Cathedral of Saint Joseph in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. All are invited. A special invitation is extended to consecrated virgins from everywhere.

Above photos are of Jennifer Settle's consecration in Philadelphia, at the hands of Archbishop Charles Chaput. Photos are courtesy of Sarah Webb of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Right: Karen Paschke, Diocese of Madison, with Most Reverend Robert Morlino, Bishop



Anniversary Reflections: 25 Years

Louise Paré, Diocese of Lansing, consecrated May 1, 1992.

On May 1st, 2017, I celebrated the 25th anniversary of my consecration. I picked the date for my consecration for three reasons. First, it ushers in the month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is also the feast day of St. Joseph the Worker. One of Joseph's many titles is *Protector of Virgins* and I have always experienced his special care and protection. In 1992 when I was consecrated, May 1st was a Friday — the First Friday of the month, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. So I always remember these special devotions and the way they are intimately tied to my vocation.

The year 2016 saw major changes in my life — changes that have a big effect on how I live out my vocation. In late October the diocese of Lansing, MI sponsored a vocation event for young women considering their vocations. Thirty-three women showed up at my house with a million questions about being a consecrate virgin. We spent several hours together taking a deep look at everything from how I discerned it so many years ago, to prayer, to the challenges and the blessings of this life. I realized right away that I was not going to be able to take these questions lightly. They were asking deep questions and they deserved thoughtful answers. This experience moved me deeply because I realized anew that there was nothing more important in my life — nothing that meant more to me. After all these years, the desire of my heart is just as deep and strong as it had been twenty-five years ago.

As I considered this experience I felt the Lord speaking to me and telling me he wanted everything in my life to flow directly from my consecrated life. I realized that there was nothing more important and that he wanted it to be even more pronounced in my life. I realized my vocation should be my reference point for everything else in life, the rich fountain from which my life would flow. I was moved by this image, but little did I know how important it would become in a short period of time.

For 42 years I had worked for a Catholic publisher. I always considered this to be a mission, and a reflection of my consecrated life. It is such a blessing to know that the work I was doing reached literally millions of people and helped them to come closer to Christ. What a privilege! All that changed on November 8th. Due to financial difficulties at work, my job, as well as several others, was eliminated. In a matter of five minutes I went from an active, exciting work life to being unemployed, cut off from my sense of mission and from 42 years of history with Servant Books. It was quite a blow. I was not ready to be retired. What was I going to do with my life? In the middle of my shock the thought came back to me: “Let everything in my life flow directly from my consecrated life.”

My life since then has been an amazing adventure with the Lord as he leads me through this difficult time of change. The first thing I discovered was that financially I could afford to retire early, removing the need to be concerned about money. What a blessing! From day one I heard consistent words from my trusted friends and my pastor — that God was in this change in my life. I was encouraged to consider becoming a spiritual director and to invest more in Church life. I heard again from the Lord: “I am taking you out of the business world and bringing you into the life of the Church”. It has been six months now and I see so many opportunities and changes in my life. I am pursuing training as a spiritual director and have been busy in my parish, teaching in adult education, working with RCIA candidates, serving on the Alpha course, and being part of a discipleship training group.

When I have been impatient to see progress in my life, God has urged me not to lose the importance of this time of restoration. It is almost like an extended retreat. Without the daily stress of work, I can spend more time in prayer and God is doing a deep work of healing and renewal. There is a consistent factor that undergirds everything and upholds me daily: I belong to Christ and he belongs to me. I look forward to seeing where he leads and to taking on new roles of service.

I celebrate twenty-five years as a consecrated virgin with deep joy at God's faithfulness and love for me. He continues to renew his call to me, and by his grace I am able to respond on a deeper and deeper level. I look forward to sharing more in the future about where God leads me.

Anniversary Reflections: 5 Years

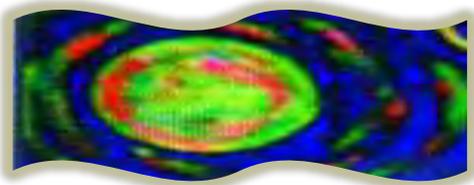
Ginnie Meyer, Archdiocese of Chicago, consecrated December 29, 2012

This December, I will celebrate my 5-year anniversary of my consecration to my Lord. I feel so blessed in my life to be a bride of Christ. In my 5-year journey of discernment, it seemed that every sleeping and waking moment was spent in the determination to fulfill the Call that I heard from the Lord, to become a consecrated virgin living in the world.

When the ceremony, which was the most memorable day of my life, was over, I found myself asking, "What next?" "What was I thinking about before I heard this Call?" "What are God's plans for me now?"

First of all, I had a better understanding of my preceding life — of why I was so focused on God's love and wanting more and more to be near to Him. Even as a child, I had enjoyed attending Mass and prayer services while my friends and siblings did not. I also did not go through that common period of abandoning the Church during my young adult life. At the same time, I had no desire to become a nun or religious. I loved being out in the world, among God's people and teaching dance to young children.

Now as a consecrated virgin, I think that my family and friends also have a better understanding of my love for God and that, although not married as expected, I am not abandoned. I regularly attend daily Mass and present our petitions and prayers to the Lord. They feel free to ask me questions about my faith in God and the Church. I have been so blessed to travel to the Holy Land, where I renewed my baptismal vows and my consecration commitment. I was also so blessed to attend the ending of the year of consecrated life in Rome. I continue to meet with my spiritual



Partial Painting of the Miracle of the Sun by Joyce Stolberg

director and the Chicago bishops. I am active in "The Welcoming" and "Youth Ministries and Bible Studies" at my parish. I no longer worry about where God is leading me. I just sit in silence and listen to his voice. I now trust that He will lead and guide me in my daily life and let me know how I can best serve Him.

Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

When I recently learned that there are those who are collecting discarded human embryos, making jewelry out of them and selling them, some to the mothers who had the lives of their babies terminated but who feel that having jewelry made from their aborted babies will keep the babies close to them, I was stunned and deeply saddened. This is very disturbing but I remember the words of Mother Teresa - that if we would kill innocent babies in the womb, what would we not do? As we move further and further into the secularizing of our culture, human life seems to be becoming trivialized. We need to help each other to find ways to witness to the humanity, to the unique sacredness, of each and every human life, from conception to natural death. Here is a passage from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*: "So great is the value of a human life, and so inalienable the right to life of an innocent child growing in the mother's womb, that no alleged right ... can justify a decision to terminate that life."

Also from Pope Francis: "I pray and ask you to pray with me for all girls and boys, victims of violence, of exploitation and wars. This is a plague, this is a hidden scream which must be heard by all of us and we cannot continue to pretend that we do not see or hear it." Let us be attentive and responsive to this 'hidden scream' and pray that the Holy Spirit will raise up defenders of life who will bring the Light of Christ into the dark places of the world. Mary, Mother of Fatima, help us to help your children – please!

"The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor" and Answers it with Dr. Joanna Roberts, MD.



Dr. Joanna Mary Roberts was born in Buffalo, New York on March 12, 1938. A devout Catholic all her life, Joanna Roberts received her M.D. degree from the University of Buffalo in 1964, and chose to dedicate her life to serving the poor by providing medical care in underserved areas.

She worked in Buffalo, New York, in the Mississippi Delta, on a Native American reservation in Wisconsin, and in 1974 she moved to Beckley West Virginia to work in a neighborhood health center, the Mountaineer Family Health Plan, and then established an independent practice, opening the St. Jude clinic in the small town of Rhodell, West Virginia in 1977. She provided excellent medical care and also involved the patients and community in developing ways to improve their own health. She restored dignity and self-respect to the poor among whom she worked. One friend commented: "Joanna Roberts practiced Cadillac medicine for a population who could for the most part just afford junkers."

Joanna Roberts received the Consecration of Virgins in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, and she has surely given us a radiant example of how to live our vocation to the fullest. To honor her medical service, Pope Benedict XVI awarded Dr. Roberts the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Cross," which was presented to her by Bishop Michael J Bransfield together with Bishop emeritus Bernard W Schmitt at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on December 15, 2006.

Dr. Roberts retired in 2012 due to poor health. She died on December 22, 2016 and was buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in Lackawanna, New York. Rest in peace, Dr. Joanna Mary Roberts, for your good deeds follow you to your heavenly home.

References:

This article was compiled by Joyce Stolberg using information from: *The Catholic Spirit*, December 8, 2006, *The Catholic Spirit*, January 6, 2017, and the Lantz Funeral Home Obituary. Picture: from Lantz Funeral Home.

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