



September 15, 2015 – Our Lady of Sorrows

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

By the time you receive this message, we will be in the midst of the visit of the Holy Father to the United States. Pope Francis will be speaking with the United States bishops in Washington during his visit and then we will join him for the canonization of Blessed Junipero Serra, the great missionary to California. As I understand it, this will be the first canonization conducted on U.S. soil. It will take place on the east front of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in north-east Washington, D.C.

Then the Holy Father will visit the President and speak to a joint session of the houses of congress. No doubt that will be a challenging presentation given the Holy Father’s concerns for the poor and the dangers of unlimited capitalism.

The pope will then travel to New York for a speech to the United Nations which I can’t help but think will be about world peace and the need to resolve peacefully the many wars and lesser tensions in our world.

Finally, as the primary purpose of the visit, the Holy Father will travel to Philadelphia to participate in the world conference on the family, which Archbishop Chaput has been working so diligently to organize and promote. The bishops are again expected to meet with the Holy Father on Sunday and participate in the closing Mass that same afternoon.

I pray that should this missive arrive in time in your homes, that you take this matter to prayer each day asking for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all involved that this occasion may be an opportunity for a great flourishing of the faith. If you read this after the fact, take a similar stance before the Lord and ask for great fruit in the Church in the United States from this wonderful pastoral visit. Prayer may not be the only answer to our needs, but it is always the most important one.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing



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## Our Sorrowful Mother and the Glory of the Cross

Today we remember our Mother under her title of Our Lady of Sorrows, and earlier this month we celebrated the Triumph of the Cross of God's Eternal Son. These celebrations offer us the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of a virginal vocation lived solely for Christ as a vocation that includes both vertical and horizontal mystical dimensions in its expression of love for him.

The Cross was the instrument of salvation chosen by the Eternal Father: he sent his Son at the moment in history when the cross was the type of scaffolding used by the Roman Imperium to impose the death penalty. Accused of blasphemy by his own people, the innocent Jesus of Nazareth was condemned to death on a cross.

Consider that this cross we contemplate is a *positive* sign, rather than a negative sign: it was designed to crucify the convicted with open arms, and it even appears as the positive plus sign of math. If we desire to follow the way of his love, we need to embrace the positive aspect of carrying the Cross, even as Simon of Cyrene embraced the Cross with Jesus of Nazareth on the way to Golgotha. In his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed: "Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Lk. 22: 42). The way of perfection on our walk to eternity – the way of the Cross – is a way of acceptance of the will of the Eternal Father.

As consecrated virgins, we are called to carry the Cross in the same way that the Queen of Virgins, the Mother of our Beloved Spouse, carried the Cross. In the depth of her suffering, Mary of Nazareth walked in contemplation of her Son as he carried the Cross of Salvation, and she did so in holy acceptance of the will of the Eternal Father for him: "We are lifted up with the crucified Christ, leaving behind us earth and sin so that we may gain the things above. So great and outstanding a possession is the cross that he who wins it has won a treasure. Now you can see that the Cross is Christ's glory and triumph." (A discourse of St Andrew of Crete).

Blessed Mary of Nazareth contemplated her son in his way of the Cross, just as He contemplated his sorrowful Mother who stood beside him during his way of suffering. He turned his eyes to her blessed being: "Behold I make all things new!" (Rev. 21:1-5a). The Virgin Mother and Queen of Martyrs was enlightened by the divine grace of the Eternal Father in her Immaculate Heart, and she recognized that the triumph of her Son would yield for us eternal life. When she met him on the sorrowful way and at the foot of his Cross, she embraced *us* in him, in our new identity as children of God. It was from this holy Cross that the Eternal Father elected her to be our Blessed Mother: "Woman, behold, your son!" In turn He said to John the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" (John 19:26-27).

The meaning of the passion and death of our Divine Lord is to "make all things new." The virgin saints witnessed to this new reality as they joyfully accepted martyrdom in anticipation of joining their Lord and Spouse. These sisters of ours suffered martyrdom in the face of a pagan culture, and they died accepting the joy of his cross. We suffer a new way of martyrdom in the face of our present culture, which seems to understand the love of Jesus Christ solely as a horizontal love, that is, as a call to serve only this world. As his virgin brides, we are called to be and to serve his people as he did, in the totality of an eternal love that is complete in both its horizontal and vertical dimensions. We are to live in this world by following our Divine Spouse and defeating any temptation to accept a way that involves only a partial meaning of his Cross, that is, a Cross that exists without glory and triumph.

The virgin is consecrated as "an eschatological image of the world to come and the glory of the heavenly Bride of Christ," and she lives this reality as she distinguishes between the Cross of Jesus Christ and the cross of works alone of the pagan culture about us. The virgin's joy in the Cross shows its transcendental meaning: we pass through this brief earthly existence as we work for eternal life: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband..." (Rev. 21:1-2).

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### USACV Elections Fall 2015

Two USACV Council positions, President and At-Large Representative, will open January 1, 2016. Details of the governance structure of the association can be found in the organizational statutes (bylaws) of the USACV, which are available upon request. A description of the term, duties, and responsibilities of the two open positions can be found in the May 31, 2015 issue of *The Lamp*. A letter describing in more depth how the work of the association is currently being carried out has also been mailed to all members of the USACV.

#### Candidacy:

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 23, 2015. Before ballots are mailed out, we also encourage each candidate to submit a biographical statement (approx. 500 words) including remarks about why she desires to serve in the position, how she envisions carrying out the responsibilities, and some information about her background and life as a consecrated virgin.

#### Eligibility to Vote:

A member is eligible to vote in the 2015 election if she has a consecration certificate on file with the USACV archivist and if she has registered as a USACV member in 2015 (Article III, Section D 2). Ballots will be mailed in early November to those listed as registered members on October 31, 2015. ***If you have not yet registered as a member in 2015, now would be a good time to do so!***

#### Voting Process:

Ballots (and candidate biographies) will be mailed in early November 2015. Ballots will be due back to our Elections Team leader, Paula Willenbrink, by Friday, December 4, 2016. Ballots must be sent by a postal service (not email or fax) and received by Paula on or before December 4 in order to be counted.

#### Election Results:

Ballots will be opened and counted in the presence of an independent party. The position of President must be elected by a simple majority (over 50% of voting members). The At-Large Representative council member seat will be won by the candidate receiving the most votes of the voting members (Article VI, Section F). "Voting members" refers to the number of valid ballots that are returned, not to the total membership (see Article XI). 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, 2015 issue of *The Lamp*.



**What's this?** Attendees at the 2015 convocation pose with an effigy of Pope Francis. Come to Rome and meet him in person! See pp. 5 and 12 for more information.

## *From the President's Journal*

*By Judith Stegman*

On this Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, what comes to mind are the many world situations that must continue to grieve the heart of our Blessed Mother, even as we, her daughters, are grieved at heart. As we read the pages of this issue of *The Lamp*, let us focus upon the many ways in which we as consecrated virgins are called forth to offer Jesus as Bridegroom, as Spouse, to a world in such need of the hope that can be found only in Him. "Those who consecrate their chastity under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit do so for the sake of more fervent love of Christ and of greater freedom in the service of their brothers and sisters" (Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, 2).

I offer a special word of welcome to the newly consecrated virgins featured in this issue of *The Lamp*. Welcome to the *Ordo Virginum*! May we assist one another in keeping our lamps full of oil in our journey as his brides.

## *Announcements and News*

### **Upcoming Events**

2016 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, August 6-10, 2016, The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center, Chicago, Illinois

2016 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity, August 2-5, 2016, The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center, Chicago, Illinois

"Save the Date" Announcement: Consecrated virgins of the Archdiocese of Portland will once again host a retreat for consecrated virgins in summer 2016. The retreat will be held June 16-19, 2016 at Our Lady of Peace Retreat House in Oregon. - Loretta Matulich.

### **Upcoming Issues of *The Lamp***

December 12, 2015 Our Lady of Guadalupe  
February 2, 2016 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life  
May 29, 2016 Feast of Corpus Christi  
September 8, 2016 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

### **Current Council**

#### **Members and Officers**

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

Magalis Aguilera, Member-at-large, 2013-2015  
(Appointed Vice-President through 2015);  
Archdiocese of Miami.

Margaret Flipp, Treasurer, 2014-2016,  
Archdiocese of San Francisco.

Mary Kay Lacke, Member-at-large, 2014-2016  
(appointed Secretary through 2015) Diocese of  
Steubenville.

Marie Beccaloni, Member-at-large, 2015-2017,  
Archdiocese of Chicago.



### **Recordings Available**

Recordings from the 2015 Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity, and from the 2015 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins, are now available. Order forms are available on the USACV website.

### **Publication Available**

Consecrated virgin Diane Farr offers the following announcement concerning publication of the essays on the vocation of consecrated virginity that she has written for *The Lamp*:

"Some of you have suggested that to celebrate the year of consecrated life, I compile a booklet of my essays to be made available for meditation and formation. The booklet contains twenty three essays. You may obtain a copy by sending \$12.00 to cover printing and shipping costs. Do not hesitate to contact me, if for any reason you are not able to afford the full cost. You may pay by check or PayPal to [gfarr77@gmail.com](mailto:gfarr77@gmail.com). My mailing address is Diane Farr, 901 Bowman Road, Elmira, NY 14905.



## Family Scrapbook

Consecrated Virgins “Family” Scrapbook – Vickie Hamilton:

The family album made it to this year’s convocation. Thanks to all those who provided mementos and gave permission for their use in the album. To any of the newly consecrated, or even those not so newly consecrated, please feel free to send material for display in the album. There is plenty of room to add pages and we

promise to take care that the album is only available at USACV gatherings. Much of the original material came from the official USACV archive, so the album is considered part of that archive. [Editor’s note: the family album is beautiful and was warmly embraced by those who attended this year’s convocation, and those who attended this year’s Information Conference. Thank you, Vickie, for your labor of love. We look forward to the historical album(s) you are also preparing with Convocation photos.]

### *Rome 2016: Close of the Year of Consecrated Life*

#### **Invitation:**

The Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Chair of the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has received and passed along to Bishops in the United States an invitation to the *Ordo Virginum* to participate in an International Gathering in Rome to the theme of “Consecrated Life in Communion.” All consecrated virgins were invited to participate in the gathering, to be held in Rome from Thursday, January 28 to Sunday, January 31, 2016.

In the invitation extended to consecrated virgins through their Bishops, Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), wrote in regard to the *Ordo Virginum*:

Clearly characteristic of this consecration is the special relationship of communion with the local and universal Church (cfr. *Vita consecrata*, n. 42). In the lived experience of the journey of the local church, consecrated women in the *Ordo Virginum* were called to share the Church’s evangelizing passion and to find nourishment and guidance to help them grow in their dedication to the Lord.

For these same reasons, in January of 2016, this Dicastery for consecrated life is promoting an International gathering open to all women who belong to the *Ordo virginum*, to the Bishops who accompany them or their Delegates, as an occasion to examine this form of life, in accord with the themes which all consecrated persons were invited to reflect upon and realize during this Year, particularly the common foundations of consecrated life.

Given the specific nature of the *Ordo virginum*, this gathering is considered a precious opportunity for consecrated virgins coming from many diverse countries to get to know each other and to share their personal experiences.

#### **Program of Events:**

A final program for the event has not yet been released by CICLSAL. Please contact consecrated virgin Betsy Lillis, [U2adorejesus@gmail.com](mailto:U2adorejesus@gmail.com) for the tentative program, summarized as follows:

[Jan. 27 to Jan. 31, 2016 International Symposium sponsored by CICLSAL for all those in Consecrated Life.]

Jan. 28 to Jan. 31, 2016 Symposium events dedicated to the *Ordo Virginum*.

*Events to be celebrated in common with all forms of Consecrated Life:*

January 30, 2016, 8:00pm, Prayer Vigil in St. Peter’s Basilica “Prophecy, Holiness and Martyrdom in the Human City.”

February 1, 2016: Audience with the Holy Father.

February 2, 2016: Closing Eucharist of the Year of Consecrated Life.

**For information concerning registration and housing, please see page 12**

## Consecration Announcements

### United States:

**May 31, 2015, Sheila Ryan, Diocese of Pittsburgh, at the hands of The Most Reverend David A. Zubik**

**June 20, 2015, Cara Buskmiller, Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Diocese of Dallas, at the hands of The Most Reverend J. Douglas Deshotel**

**A personal note from Cara:** “My parents and my younger siblings (age twenty-four to fourteen) all attended and participated in my consecration. [See picture, next page.] After the prayer of Consecration, the bishop asked me to turn around so that the congregation could clap – this embarrassed me, but I obeyed and then realized that I should make my face show how happy I was to be consecrated, instead of showing my embarrassment. So I smiled as much as I could, and several people said they could see my joy. And finally: the consecrated virgins who attended gave me a beautiful gift: a first-class relic of St. Maria Goretti. Blessed be our Spouse!”

**June 20, 2015, Minette Sternke, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Diocese of Peoria, at the hands of The Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky**

**A personal note from Minette:** “Lately, every time I enter a church and look at the crucifix, I am reminded of the antiphon that can be used at the ‘end’ of the Rite: ‘I am espoused to Him whom the Angels serve – Sun and Moon bow down before His Glory!’ I look at the crucifix and can’t help but think, ‘I can’t believe I’m married to YOU!’ That is not in any way derogatory to Him, but wonder that He has chosen me! I pray that feeling never goes away. I was so blest that day – six interpreters sharing their skills to make the entire Mass accessible to all; seven priests concelebrating (one had just been ordained the month before; eight consecrated virgins; members of the Deaf community from as far away as Seattle; and so many of my

family came in, from both coasts. One of the highlights occurred after Holy Communion: Mom and I presented fresh calla lilies to the Blessed Mother. It was definitely a day to celebrate.”

**June 28, 2015, Sara Boghdan, Diocese of Metuchen, at the hands of The Most Reverend Paul G. Bootkoski**

**A personal note from Sara:** “This day was truly the most special day of my life. I was touched that I had so many loving and supporting me. Words will never be adequate to describe the joy that I experienced. My Bridegroom was glorified, and I will hold the memories close for the rest of my life.”

**August 8, 2015 Sophia Winiarski, Archdiocese of Hartford, at the hands of The Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair**

**A Personal note from Sophia:** “After months of preparation, Consecration day arrived and was beautiful in every way. I was in awe of how Jesus had taken care of so many details, truly a tender and caring Bridegroom. I was filled with a humble gratitude and utter surrender which continue to grow, as does our relationship, ever fresh and new with each day. My heart is so full, words are inadequate to express my feelings beyond ‘Praise to our God, Who loves us so.’”

**August 15, 2015, Jessica Hayes, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Diocese of Ft. Wayne, at the hands of The Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades**

**August 15, 2015, Luciana (Luz) Manrique, Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Diocese of Sacramento, at the hands of The Most Reverend Jaime Soto**

### South Africa:

**August 1, 2015, Antoinette Padua, Archdiocese of Cape Town, at the hands of The Most Reverend Stephen Brislin**







Photo © by Joe Romie



Photo © by Joe Romie

**The Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity is a solemn, rare and beautiful ceremony during which a virgin is consecrated by her local bishop to a life of virginity lived in the world.** The virgin carries a candle or a lamp, a symbol of purity and the light of Christ, as does Minette Sternke (upper left.) The ceremony has elements reminiscent of the ordination of priests and of a marriage ceremony. Jessica Hayes (upper center) prostrates at the altar while the whole assembly prays the litany of the Saints. Cara Buskmiller (left below) poses with her Bishop and her family. The Bishop says the prayer of consecration, after which the insignia --- a veil, a ring, and the Book of the Liturgy of the Hours are presented to the virgin. Jessica Hayes (upper right) receives a ring from her Bishop; Luciana Manrique (right) receives the Book from her Bishop. The newly consecrated woman (Luciana) ascends the altar steps for the remainder of the Mass to symbolize her new place in the local church.



**"I am espoused to him  
whom the angels serve;  
sun and moon stand in  
wonder at his glory."  
(Antiphon from Liturgy)**

**(Below)** Brides of Christ: Sara Boghdan (left), Antoinette Padua (left center), Minette Sternke (rt. center) and Sophia Winiarski (rt.) rejoice with bishops and friends following their ceremonies.



"Photo courtesy of The Catholic Spirit, Diocese of Metuchen"



# 2015 Convocation of Consecrated Virgins

The 2015 United States Convocation of Consecrated Virgins was held August 12 to 16 at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. This location has often served as the site for the annual convocation and was a familiar place to the majority of attendees.

The convocation began with an opening Mass on Wednesday evening and presentations Thursday morning by Bishop Boyea, during which he used Holy Scripture to consider the overall and daily vocational call of God to the consecrated virgin. Linda Long offered a presentation on the convocation theme, "The Beauty of Following Christ," as she considered the address given by Pope Saint John Paul II to consecrated virgins gathered in Rome in 1995. This was followed by a Thursday afternoon panel discussion on prayer, during which panelists Karen Bussey, Twanna Bolling, and Sarah Navarro offered insights to encourage the prayer lives of consecrated virgins.

Friday morning was dedicated to considering the lives of virgin saints and martyrs. In her presentation entitled "In Communion with the Order of Virgins: the Virgin Saints – they Lived with Passion; They Gave their Lives," Mary Kay Lacke spoke in depth of the exemplary lives of four women who had deliberately lived in virginity outside of a communal setting – three of who are canonized. Her presentation was a fitting prelude to Fr. Michael Fuller, author of *The Virgin Martyrs: A Hagiographical and Mystagogical Interpretation*, who spoke enthusiastically and knowledgeably on the witness of the virgin martyrs.







On Friday afternoon, virgins received an insightful presentation from consecrated virgin Magalis Aguilera on “The Stages of Perfection in Our Walk with Christ.” She distributed an extensive study booklet, including graphics, which will also be made available with recordings of the convocation presentations. Rounding out Friday afternoon was a panel discussion on “In the World but Not of It: How to Live Consecrated Virginity in a Secular, Humanistic World.” Panelists Barbara Blumers, Theresa Prosser, and Paula Willenbrink offered their own experiences to introduce smaller group discussions among us. Saturday morning concluded the formal presentations, with an address by Judith Stegman on the significance of the vocation of consecrated virginity as a *public* vocation in the Church.

Daily celebrations of Holy Mass, Morning Prayer, and Evening Prayer gave focus to our time together, and afternoon periods of Eucharistic Adoration gave opportunity for quiet reflection and personal prayer. As well, the days together were marked with evening social gatherings, as highlighted in a number of the personal reflections below.

Twenty-three consecrated virgins and one candidate were present, including two virgins from dioceses outside the United States, and two for whom this was the first convocation. The number gathered was somewhat smaller than in some years, due perhaps to the later date in August which conflicted with preparations for the beginning of a new school year. Others could not participate this year in light of plans of a number to head to Rome in 2016 for the days dedicated to the *Ordo Virginum* at the close of the Year of Consecrated Life.

**Beth Grebe, Archdiocese of Milwaukee**

Fr. Michael Fuller's talk on the virgin martyrs was enthusiastic, full of information, and very humorous.

**Kerry Hubata, Archdiocese of Chicago**

Once again, I felt blessed not only to be with my sisters in the Lord, but to have the convocation at Mundelein, close enough to commute. Though several obligations prevented me from attending some events, it was a grace to attend Mass each day in the atmosphere of such deep devotion and to receive inspiration from the various presentations. My sincere thanks to all the planners and participants!

**Jenna Chang, Diocese of Lubbock (TX)**

I attended my first Convocation since becoming a consecrated virgin on June 28, 2014 and met other virgins for the first time. I am overjoyed to share the bond of love for Christ with these women and I look forward to being part of the Association.

**Monica Egerbacher, Archdiocese, Vienna (Austria)**

"It is a great temptation to judge our calling on the basis of the reception that we receive." This quote from Bishop Boyea's talk, *Following God's Call*, calls me to be brave, bold and to expect God to work in and through me." ○

**Mary Kay Lacke, Diocese of Steubenville**

It is always a joy to be at Mundelein for the Convocation. The greater joy, however, is to gather with other consecrated virgins and to share the beauty of this vocation with each other. Renewing friendships and meeting new consecrated virgins enriched my experience of the Convocation. I enjoyed the mealtime conversations, reflections following the talks that were presented, and the evening socials when we could visit or enjoy an inspiring movie. These times really strengthened me in my vocation.

Having heard Bishop Boyea speak at the USACV Information Conference at DeWitt, MI, the week before our Convocation, I was very impressed by the totally different presentations he gave at Mundelein. God has gifted him with deep insight into the evangelical nature of our vocation; I am very grateful for this gift. I also appreciated Father Michael Fuller's presentation on the virgin martyrs. His emphasis on their love for Christ, the underlying motivation for their willingness to die rather than yield to their persecutors, was very edifying. There seemed to be a general consensus in the group that we would like him back next year.

Both the talks and the panel discussions given by the consecrated virgins demonstrated to me the treasure that we

share in this vocation and the enrichment that God gives to the life of our Holy Mother the Church through each virgin who lives faithfully the consecration she has received. Everyone who presented a talk or panel discussion did an excellent job! I thank all those virgins who worked together to prepare the Convocation. I especially thank Judith Stegman and Marie Beccaloni for their beautiful and gracious servant-leadership. They were a joy to work with!

**Ginnie Meyer, Archdiocese of Chicago**

Each year, I look forward to the Convocation sponsored by the USACV. Living in the Chicago area, I most look forward to the convocations held at the St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein. My travel plans are easy, but the beauty of the Seminary grounds brings a sense of awe and stillness to our getaway. We were blessed with beautiful weather. Meeting new virgins and seeing our sisters in Christ brings much joy, as we keep in touch and share our vocations. Everything is brought together with our forums, prayers, meals, Mass, and evening gatherings. My spiritual director lives and teaches at the Seminary. He joined us for breakfast one morning and mentioned to me later that he noticed the joy in the virgins as they gathered together. I have been blessed to be able to attend the convocations and am looking forward to next year's convocation at the Cenacle in Chicago.

**Sara Navarro, Archdiocese of Chicago**

Our Spouse is love and mercy. We give thanks to Him that by His love and mercy we had the opportunity to gather this year. It is a precious gift that we may be together. We need each other. Everyone is a blessing for each other. May Jesus grant us the graces we need to continue growing in our love for God and in union together. May God bless those responsible for this marvelous, magnificent week.

**Karina Reyes, Archdiocese of Chicago**

I am thankful that our beloved Spouse brought us together one more time. We had the opportunity to share stories, lift one another's spirits, and above all, allow the Holy Spirit to enter our hearts and see Jesus in our sisters.

**Ann Stitt, Archdiocese of Boston**

Bishop Boyea always gives us the "same-old, same-old" Word of God that is always new, always refreshing! In speaking of our general vocation and our daily living out of God's call, he illustrated his talk by telling us of the prophets, how God prepared and purified each of them to proclaim his message. Judith gave a very clear talk on the public nature of consecrated virginity, and Mary Kay spoke powerfully, as did the panel on prayer and its different aspects – all good nourishment for mind and heart, encouraging us by the



examples they gave in the context of their talks and in their own personal example. For *what* a person says and the *way* a person says it have equal weight.

All the informal encounters with my sister consecrated virgins were so felicitous and heartwarming. The song composed originally in Spanish, which we sang in its English translation, is lovely, light-hearted and profound – a real gift, to sing such things of the gentle love between Spouse and espoused. I found the discussions to be constructive, showing progress from some uncertainties of last year that had been expressed. Changes are coming, and they will come about in God's good time. We members are just as responsible as the Council for our association. We serve Christ in our vocation, answering Yes to His call, each new day that He gives us. God is Good! [Editor's note: the song Ann speaks of is "Iglesia Celeste" composed by consecrated virgin Lisandra Chaves of Costa Rica. During our anniversary celebration on Saturday evening, consecrated virgins gathered at the convocation sang along with a video of Lisandra in Spanish and in English. See <http://youtu.be/XI3Eg7KTlgs>. ]

### **Andrea Valenzuela, consecrated virgin**

My name is Andrea Valenzuela Molina, and I am writing now from the Holy Land (Jerusalem). I was born in Guatemala City and have been working as a missionary; I was consecrated in the Diocese of Saint John the Baptist of Calama in Chile, on May 31, 2011, the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I came to Chicago to study English and to prepare for my next mission, and in Chicago I had the great blessing of meeting Sara Navarro. I thank God and Sara for inviting me to participate in the August convocation, which prepared me for this mission that engages me in Jerusalem for several weeks. I think I have been able to meet the true face of Christ in each of the children who attend the Home for Children with Special Needs of San Vincent in Ain Karem.

I came to the convocation needing new oil for my lamp. It was beautiful to meet consecrated virgins in the United States and to see that diversity unites in our union with the Divine Spouse. I enjoyed every moment of prayer, both communal and personal; the moments of silence, the fraternal moments, and I experienced with the Psalmist, "See how good and pleasant it is when brothers live in unity." Although conferences were in English, I asked God to give me spiritual ears to let me hear what He wanted to instruct. Each convocation allows us to continue as faithful brides of Christ.

## *Something Ancient --- Something New Continued*

Saint Peter gave up the totality of his life to follow his Lord and Master, and he also suffered martyrdom on a cross. He was full of fear when Jesus of Nazareth began his way of the Cross, but he was full of the power of the Holy Spirit when he discovered that Jesus' suffering yielded eternal life. As vicar of his Lord, Saint Peter carried the Cross in both its horizontal and vertical meanings: "...But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness..." (2 Pet. 3:10-11).

As we contemplate our sorrowful Mother, we contemplate also the victory of the Cross and the dignity of the human family in its identity as children of the one Eternal Father. As consecrated virgins, it is our joy and our duty to pray and to spend ourselves for the salvation of the whole world.





## ***Rome 2016: Close of the Year of Consecrated Life***

### ***Registration:***

Pre-registration forms for the conference were due by August 20, 2015. Note to all who have pre-registered: In order to assure representation from all continents, CICLSAL has said that by September 15, 2015 they will confirm the number of persons from each country who may register for the symposium. We will pass along this information as soon as it is received, so that registrations can be confirmed.

It is our understanding that final registrations and fees (approximately 100/150 Euro) will be due by October 31, 2015.

Betsy Lillis is collecting registrations from virgins in the United States.  
Betsy Lillis, U2adorejesus@gmail.com

### ***Housing Opportunity:***

Consecrated virgins attending the Rome 2016 gathering are responsible for making their own travel and housing arrangements.

For your convenience, an international group of consecrated virgins has reserved a block of rooms at a religious house close to St. Peters Basilica, for six nights, from *Thursday, January 28 to Wednesday, February 3, 2016*. Rooms may still be available, although the number is limited and deposits have already been paid. Please contact Betsy Lillis for more information about this possibility. Betsy Lillis, U2adorejesus@gmail.com

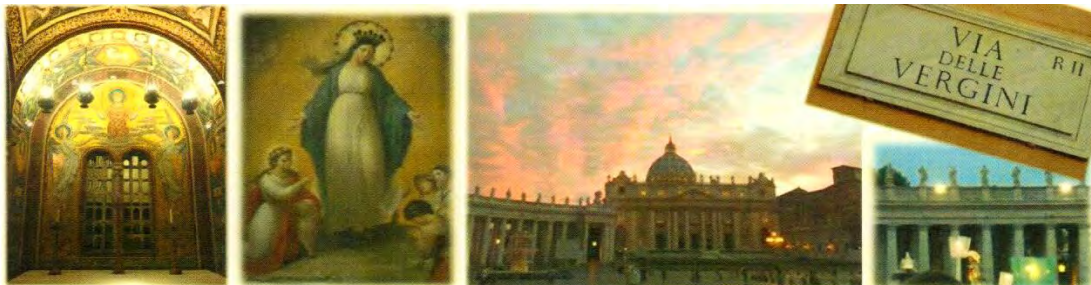
### ***Notes:***

At this time, 27 consecrated virgins from the United States have pre-registered for the Rome 2016 gathering.

Please keep in mind that this gathering/housing opportunity for consecrated virgins is *not* a full pilgrimage to Rome. Virgins are responsible for arranging their own travel to and from Rome, transportation within Rome, and meals (some will be provided during the conference days).

For those who are arranging housing with the international group being coordinated through Betsy Lillis: After the final program of events is issued by CICLSAL, and as the year progresses, we hope to also arrange visits to churches of interest to consecrated virgins (perhaps Saint Agnes in Agone and Saint Agatha dei Goti or Saint Mary Major), a festive meal together, and prayer by language group in the chapel of the residence. Please be in touch if you have ideas or would like to assist with coordination of these activities!

Updates will continue to be posted in *Monday Morning Mail* and sent to registrants for the conference and/or housing, as applicable.



## Anniversary Reflections: 20 Years

**Elizabeth Lee, Diocese of Fall River, consecrated July 1, 1995**

From the “Pond” to the “Ocean,” and Back Again:  
Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World

People sometimes wonder about the spirituality that marks my journey as a consecrated virgin living in the world. I describe my life metaphorically as undulating between a “quiet pond” and the tumultuous “ocean”.

Each day begins at the “pond.” I pray the Liturgy of the Hours and make a Holy Hour, listening to the Lord: I enter within, realizing that He will once again journey within me throughout the day, revealing his Will. That Will includes Christ’s desire for a life of greater self-knowledge, surrender and ever increasing dying to self through union with Him. He intends to share all His attributes with me. What a great act of mercy and grace! What faith I need to believe this — in pursuing this vital union with Him, it truly is no longer I; it becomes “we” who breathe, walk, pray, and work together. At times this union has ebbed and flowed in my human frailty. I have always desired an espousal to someone who would strongly challenge me, and in my Consecration I more than met my match! Yet, He has persistently drawn me closer. We receive according to our faith and He incessantly challenges us to greater depths. For this I am so grateful.

Following my precious time at the pond, I have but a short walk over to the ocean. The boardwalk is well marked and well-traveled, leading from the pond to the ocean shoreline. The busyness of our days resembles the “ocean.” Waves swell and crash on the shore, glistening peaks and foam rush in with the tides. So many bright distractions appear: opalescent shells, stones of various colors and shapes. So many delightful people come to chatter; joggers, beachcombers, families, children, and strangers, mingle as their dogs scamper about. Many wonders inhabit this vibrant, engaging, bustling place. My days can likewise be hectic --- joy, satisfaction that things go well at work, ministry, and prayer.

Yet oceans can become brutal with the change of weather; events in my life have sometimes left me bewildered. In such times, I think of the poem, *Footprints in the Sand*. I knew that I was not walking alone; the Lord was carrying me. Years later, I perceive more: He is within me; I can be transformed in His Will. We are not two, but he calls me to oneness. I know how right St. Paul was when he exclaimed, “I am living; no longer I, but Christ is living in me; and that life which I now am living in the flesh I am living by faith” (Gal 2:20). When distressed, I do

understand this. The frailties of my human condition move me to surrender to the divine Will more deeply.

When inner trials and exterior challenges weigh heavy, I return from the seashore. I feel the breeze at my back nudging me toward the inward “pond,” where the hunger for His presence is rekindled. Prayer balances me, living in His Will keeps me focused, and He holds me in a tranquil embrace. I share with Him the pleas of the many from my day along the shoreline. As swans swim by and butterflies alight, the peaceful beauty rekindles my yearning for more faith. Seeing reflections of clouds and trees in the water, I look within and ask to be a reflection of Mary who lived fully the inner life of God. I reflect within the heart of Christ so that Christ may deepen and divinize this union.

I have come to a deeper awareness that He is always within me both in the stillness of the “pond” and in the stronger motions of the ocean, and while I need both in my life, I rely first on the “pond,” (the quiet of contemplation), to ready me for the challenges and busyness of work and activity --- to prepare for the great adventure of the “ocean” with all its energetic demands. Through it all, He is within, as I move across the boardwalk, in the divinizing ebb and flow between “pond” and “ocean.” This is a good description of the spiritual life.

**Linda Ann Long, MD, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, consecrated June 3, 1995.**

How quickly 20 years have passed! I have been serving this year on our archdiocesan committee to celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life. It occurred to me this winter to have a celebration of my 20 years of consecration on June 3. Consecrated in Rome, I never had a chance to celebrate with my parish and friends here in Minnesota. My pastor and longtime friend was enthusiastic about having an anniversary Mass for me. As Providence would have it, my even longer time friend, Most Rev. Paul D. Sirba, Bishop of Duluth, MN was able to be the principal celebrant on the exact day of my anniversary.

My three non-Catholic older siblings [I am a convert] came from the East Coast to be with me. Four consecrated virgins were with me in the procession at Mass and at my home for supper. 12-14 of my priest friends were present for the Mass and several more joined us for supper along with other close friends. The music for the Mass was professional and gorgeous. The soprano changed her flight to Europe to be there.

In his homily, Bishop Sirba noted that 29 years earlier he had said his First Mass at this same altar wearing the same vestments. It was also a good celebration for the Bishop. Cardinal Burke had sent his regrets earlier with a gracious letter, promise of his prayers, and a rosary which

he had blessed on the day of his elevation to Cardinal.

I celebrated my 20th anniversary again at the annual convocation at Mundelein. I had been asked to give my personal reflections on Pope Saint John Paul II's address given on June 2, 1995 to the Pilgrimage in Rome for the 25th Anniversary of the restoration of the Rite for Consecrated Virgins Living in the World. That was the original date set for my own consecration in Rome! However my consecrating bishop, Paul Augustine Cardinal Mayer, had been asked to say Mass on that day for this pilgrimage of consecrated virgins at St. Mary Major. Thus my consecration was moved to June 3. I did attend that Mass which was in French. That was the first time that I saw, met, or even heard of another woman receiving this consecration. It was most comforting to be there.

Words alone cannot convey my gratitude to Our Divine Spouse for his Love and sustaining grace over my life and especially these past 20 years as His Bride.

### *Anniversary Reflections: 10 Years*

#### **Katie Gesto, consecrated July 9, 2005**

The uniqueness of each of our calls as consecrated virgins speaks of His artistry that is continually revealing His beauty in and through each one of us.

Several days after my consecration on July 9, 2005 I panicked as I looked at myself and did not “feel or look” like a bride of Christ. “What did I just do? This is permanent!” He soon spoke to me, “You did not chose me; I chose you. And I chose you not because of your righteousness or readiness to be my spouse, because you’re not either, but simply because I chose you.”

The subsequent years were a time of healing, growing, serving on the mission field in Africa for many years, and discovering who I am in Christ. This journey has taught me so much of His desire for His children to walk in freedom. (Galatians 5:1). Life in Christ must be one in motion-- never stagnant, always fresh, always discovering that “now is the day of [my] salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

I am constantly hungering to go deeper in Him, to ask Him, “What do you mean that we are married? Teach me how to encounter you moment by moment to really make this relationship incarnate because head knowledge will not satisfy the passions of my heart.” And the crux of this treasure, I believe, is in the heart of the Cross and Resurrection. Ephesians 1 - 3 describes the gift we have been given in Christ through the encounter of our Lover on the Cross and now alive in us.

So often I have put my identity in other holy things like being a missionary, being a consecrated virgin, being a daughter of great parents, etc. True, those are part of my

identity. But if my identity is not firstly and solely rooted firmly in believing without doubt who the Father says I am, then I will always be unstable and “doing things” to try to prove my worth in Christ. This would then negate the need for the Cross and put stock in earning my salvation and be found worthy based on my deeds. This is the scandal of the Cross. We have not earned its merits.

This coming season I will be working as a Nurse Practitioner in Sacramento, a little closer to my parents who are aging. I also feel called to set aside extended foreign mission work for a few years and to pray and work toward building unity in the Body of Christ, which is one of the calls and passions in my life, and to continue growing solid in this grace of identity in Christ. Thanks for everyone’s prayers these last years and while I was in Africa. God bless all of you and may all of us press in to God for the fullness of our life in Christ as His brides and thus brilliantly shine into the darkness of this world!

### *Anniversary Reflections: 5 Years*

#### **Margaret Flipp, Archdiocese of San Francisco, consecrated January 21, 2010**

I first felt a call to holiness and to belong to Jesus when I was around seven years old. I was reading a short life of St. Clare and I distinctly remember saying to myself, “Someday I’m going to be like her.” It was the life of prayer and penance and her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament that drew me. I also admired St. Agnes and wanted to be pure and good as she was. At eighteen I received a special invitation interiorly to belong entirely to Jesus. Of course I said, “Yes!” I entered the Poor Clares, as religious life seemed the only option at the time.

Due to family need, I left the monastery twenty-three years later, and took a private vow of virginity until such time as I could become a consecrated virgin. Twenty-seven years later, it was possible, to my joy! I realize now that those long years of preparation gave me the strong foundation for a deep prayer life, and the maturity I needed to be able to “let go” and allow Jesus to strip me of all that was unnecessary in my life. These days, my life is spent in simple openness to His Presence and His Will. I am deeply grateful for the support and love I have found in the USACV and look forward to the future in joy and hope.





## Information Conference 2015 Report

*By Mary Kay Lacke*

The 2015 USACV Information Conference was held in the St. Francis Retreat and Conference Center in DeWitt, Michigan, Aug. 4-7, 2015. This was the first time in a number of years that the conference was held in this facility, and the setting was very conducive to the purpose of the conference. The beautiful chapel in close proximity to the individual rooms and the meeting room was a well-frequented space during the days of the Conference.

Eleven women inquiring about the vocation of consecrated virginity attended the Information Conference. The group was diverse in the areas of the United States represented, age-range and levels of interest in the vocation.

The team of consecrated virgins who conducted the conference included Judith Stegman, Magalis Aguilera, Karen Bussey, Nicole Bettini and Mary Kay Lacke. Theresa Marshall, who regularly coordinates the logistics for the conference, set up the conference ahead of time and handled the registration. However, she was unable to coordinate on-site because of the death of her father.

Bishop Earl Boyea gave generously of his time to spend a day and a half at the Information Conference. His insight into the vocation is extremely important. His presentation on the history of consecrated virginity truly served to show the importance of this Divine gift in the life of the Church.

Based on the experience of past conferences, especially the 2014 conference in Malvern, input from others who have been working with inquirers about the

vocation, and her study of Church documents on the consecrated life, Judith significantly augmented three presentations on “The Fundamentals of the Vocation,” “Love and Virginity” and “Living in the World.” All three presentations were very well received, especially the one about living in the world.

There was a great desire among the participants to understand how the vocation of consecrated virginity is lived out. This gave an opportunity for the consecrated virgins to share their personal experience on spousal relationship with the Lord and spiritual motherhood.

I would personally like to thank Bishop Boyea and the other Information Conference team members who served so well those who attended the Conference. The staff at St. Francis Center is also to be commended for its great gift of hospitality and the priests who served us for confession and Mass were also a great blessing. Praise God for His great mercy!



**Grounds at St. Francis Retreat  
Center, DeWitt, Michigan**



**Information Conference  
Participants**

**I am a flower of Sharon,  
a lily of the valleys.  
Like a lily among thorns,  
so is my friend among women.  
Like an apple tree among the trees of the  
woods,  
so is my lover among men.  
In his shadow I delight to sit,  
and his fruit is sweet to my taste.**

From the Song of Songs Ch. 2:1-3

*By Florence Sundberg*

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I consecrated you...” In 1979 St. Pope John Paul II told the people of the United States: “...and so we stand up every time that human life is threatened. When the sacredness of life before birth is attacked, we will stand up and proclaim that no one ever has the authority to destroy unborn life... woe to you if you do not defend life!” We have all seen and heard of the horrors being committed by some who work in the abortion industry. But why would those who kill the unborn baby in the womb, even when the baby is fully developed, hesitate to sell the tissues and organs of those they have killed? Evil begets evil and unless good people stand strong in the path of evil and prevent it from going any further, we will see our country descend into utter depravity and the loss of souls will be incalculable. When St. Pope John Paul II traveled to St. Louis, he spoke thus: “...on the horizon of this city stands the Gateway Arch which often catches the sunlight in its different colors and hues. In a similar way, you must reflect the Light of Christ ...with the help of Mary, the young people of America will do this magnificently! Remember, Christ is calling you! The Church needs you! Let us seize the moment to proclaim the Gospel of Life! Christ is with you! Do not be afraid!” Now, more than ever before, we must heed the call to defend life, to proclaim the unique sacredness of each and every life created by God in His image. Upon the foundation of life all else stands. “Woe to you America if you do not defend life!” Be not afraid, for God is with you.



**Come on back to the USACV  
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