

The Lamp



**United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins**

December 12, 2012
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Volume 17, Issue 4

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

December 12, 2012 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

On November 11, 2012, Pope Benedict issued a Motu proprio on "The Service of Charity." He wanted to fill in some gaps in Canon Law about the exercise of Charity in the Church. This includes several emphases.

First, he encourages all of us to engage in charitable activity. We are to proclaim the Word, to celebrate the Sacraments, and we are to exercise "the ministry of charity" and he adds: "These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable." So, we have no choice, or put better, our faith impels us to serve one another.

The Holy Father really encourages lay initiatives and associations to carry out these services, "especially on behalf of the poor and suffering." Of course, since this is canonical work, he also urges that there be appropriate statutes which include "the guiding principles and objectives of the initiative, the management of funds, the profile of its workers, as well as the reports and information which must be presented to the competent ecclesiastical authority."

Pope Benedict also lays upon the local bishop the task of promoting this activity and "encourages in the faithful the spirit of practical charity as an expression of the Christian life and sharing in the mission of the Church." He is also to monitor this activity. This, of course, is to ensure the Catholic character of the service, that the "activities keep alive the spirit of the Gospel," that those who carry out the works of charity exhibit "an evangelical witness in the service of charity," that methods are not "at odds with the Church's teaching," that its operations are effective, and that donations are correctly administered.

My sisters, many of you, in addition to your consecration, manifest the charitable mission of the Church. Hopefully, these words of Pope Benedict will inspire us as we are deeply within this Season of Advent, a time of giving of ourselves.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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ORDO VIRGINUM

We dedicate this article about Virginity to our Blessed Mother in honor of her Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, and her Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12. The feasts are interrelated and full of meaning for us. We quote from “The Wonder of Guadalupe” by Francis Johnston:

“On the morning of Saturday, 9 December 1531, which was then the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, Juan Diego rose early and, leaving his house in the cold starlight, began the long walk across the undulating country to assist at the Mass in honour of his Mother and his Queen... She appeared to him asking: “Juanito my son, where are you going?... ‘I am on my way to hear Mass...’ The Lady smiled and said: “Know for certain, dearest of my sons, that I am the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God, through whom everything lives, the Lord of all things, who is Master of Heaven and Earth. I ardently desire a *teocalli* (temple) be built here for me where I will show and offer all my love, my compassion, my help and my protection to the people. I am your merciful Mother, the Mother of all who live united in this land, and of all mankind, of all those who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who have confidence in me. Here I will hear their weeping and their sorrows, and will remedy and alleviate their sufferings, necessities and misfortunes. Therefore, in order to realize my intentions, go to the house of the Bishop of Mexico City and tell him, that I sent you and that it is my desire to have a *teocalli* built here. Tell him all that you have seen and heard. Be assured that I shall be very grateful and will reward you for doing diligently what I have asked of you. Now that you have heard my words, my son, go and do everything as best as you can.” (*The Wonder of Guadalupe, The Origin and Cult of the Miraculous Image of the Blessed Virgin In Mexico*, by Francis Johnston, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. Rockford, Illinois 61105, 1981, pages 26-27).

Those words from our Blessed Virgin and Queen were spoken to Juan Diego on the 9th and the 12th of December, 1531 at Guadalupe, Mexico. It is with great joy that we consecrated virgins celebrate these great feasts honoring her perpetual virginity.

Virginity, as it takes place in time and space as a particular way of life, is an important part of the preparation for the fullness of the coming of the Kingdom of God; such virginity was revealed in the Old Testament and confirmed in the New Testament. On this Feast that we celebrate today, on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico, Our Blessed Mother identified herself as “the perfect and perpetual Virgin Mary;” in so naming herself, this state of perfect and perpetual virginity was revealed as being in the very essence of the Eternal Father who created the gift of virginity.

The history of the vocation of virginity lived in the world began and continues as the revelation of the Redeemer. Saint Augustine taught, “We will try to confirm with clear statements of the Holy Scriptures, as much as our limited memory is able to do, that perpetual chastity must not be embraced for the advantage of the present life but for the greatness of the future life that we are promised in the kingdom of heaven” (Cfr. *De sancta virginitate*, c. 22: PL 40,407, quoted in F. Vizmanos, “Las Virgenes Cristianas de la Primitiva Iglesia,” 1947).

Throughout the Old Testament we find that the Hebrew people did not grasp the meaning of chastity as a virtue - as a decision to live perpetually in a life of chastity in the totality of the woman’s being: body, mind, soul. Every single consecrated virgin has received the gift of virginity as Eve and as Mary of Nazareth received the gift of virginity. Eve lost that capacity for integral chastity by her lack of a complete donation to God’s will – by her disobedience; Mary, our Blessed Mother, kept intact the gift of integral virginity by her complete donation to God’s will – by her obedience.

According to Vizmanos, the Old Testament uses the word virginity in reference to only eight important characters among the Hebrew people: 1) there is a celebration when virginity is lost after the jubilation of a wedding feast; 2) virginity is decried when it seems that an early death is pending for a virgin; 3) virginity is named with indifference as a style of life; 4) virginity is not viewed in reference to eternal life – it is solely a reality of earth; 5) some women of Judea kept their virginity knowing that the promised Messiah was to be born of a virgin; 6) a most illustrious thought was that the Messiah might perhaps appear among a virgin’s descendants; at the same time, the greatest curse that could come from God would be sterility and lack of succession, snatched from the virgin as she waited in hope to perhaps be named among the ancestors of Christ the Redeemer; 7) Samuel’s mother Hannah prayed to God in torment and tears

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Council News

Current council members and officers are:

Judith M. Stegman, President, 2010 – 2012; Diocese of Lansing, (re-elected President 2013 – 2015)

Magalis Aguilera, Member-at-large, 2010 – 2012 (appointed **Vice-President** thru 2012); Archdiocese of Miami, (re-elected Member-at-large 2013 – 2015)

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

Mary Kay Lacke, Member-at-large, 2011-2013 (appointed **Secretary** through 2012), Diocese of Steubenville

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

Upcoming events:

2013 National Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins:

July 10-14, 2013

Mundelein Retreat and

Conference Center

Chicago area

2013 National Information

Conference:

July 30-August 2, 2013

Bethany House

at St. Francis Retreat Center,

DeWitt, Michigan

Lansing area.

Team Announcements:

Membership Team Current membership lists and association meeting minutes will be mailed this week to members. Thank you for your renewals and support.

Formation Resource Development Team – **Mary Kay Lacke**: - see special report on page 11.

Upcoming issues of *The Lamp*:

February 2, 2013 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

June 2, 2013 Feast of Corpus Christi
September 8, 2013 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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December 12, 2013 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Symposiums for Consecrated Virgins, sponsored by the Diocese of LaCrosse Office of Consecrated Life:

April 13, 2013 The Diocese of La Crosse, Office of Consecrated Life will offer a symposium on St. Joseph in the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin at the Shrine of St. Joseph in De Pere, Wisconsin. **Shirley Farrell** is coordinating things with **Barbara Swieciak**. Bishop David Ricken will join us for a presentation and celebrate Holy Mass. Final details in January.

Recordings Team: Magalis Aguilera reports that recordings of the 2012 Information Conference and 2012 Convocation are available on our website. A number of talks of the 2012 Information Conference were significantly revised from prior years, so you may find the updated recordings valuable.

Volume One, An Introduction to the

Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World is available for order through our website, www.consecratedvirgins.com. This first volume of our new series, ORDO VIRGINUM: The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Virgins in the Catholic Church, has been well-received. Consecrated virgins are encouraged to purchase copies for themselves, diocesan vocations offices and Bishops. You won't be disappointed!

Consecrated Virgins "Family" Album: **Vickie Hamilton** writes: "Please send samples of your programs, invitations, photos, or any other consecration materials for inclusion in our 'family' album(s). The first pass will be in real albums, but we hope to get virtual albums on the website too. If you have questions, please contact me. Please mail material to: Vickie Hamilton." *Note from Judith: Vickie offered to collect and organize our mementoes after a previous "samples" book disappeared. We envision a book that can travel to various events, such as convocations, so that consecrated virgins might together enjoy the memories. Even if you have sent your consecration materials in the past, it would be wonderful if you would send them again to Vickie for this purpose. Thank you, Vickie, for offering your expertise and time in this endeavor!*



Reflections on the Canonization of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha:

From **Barbara Blumers**, Archdiocese of New York:

On Sunday, October 21, 2012, Florence Sundberg and I were privileged to unite in thanksgiving with hundreds of others to celebrate the canonization of our USACV patroness St. Kateri Tekakwitha at two special Masses. We were not with St. Kateri in the glory of Rome, but rather in the forests of upper New York State, where she lived most of her life in humble simplicity and joyful love of our Divine Spouse.

The day dawned murky and overcast, with a very chilly wind. The morning Mass was celebrated outdoors in Fonda, NY, where St. Kateri lived with her uncle's family after the death of her parents and sibling from smallpox. The celebrant pointed out that we were in the very forests where she walked. At that point, I very clearly saw St. Kateri in my mind walking in the forest with small animals around her and light streaming from Heaven filtering through the leaves. The smile on her face was as dazzling as the light.

With a true sense of the dramatic, the sun broke through the clouds just prior to Holy Communion! During Communion, a small group of Mohawks chanted a song about St. Kateri to give the Mass a special Native-American flavor. At the conclusion of the Mass, the congregation was blessed with a first-class relic of St. Kateri.

The afternoon Mass was at Auriesville, which claims to be St. Kateri's birthplace. Native culture being as it is, who really knows the exact spot? As I learned in the Holy Land, it is not important knowing the exact spot where any particular event occurred; but rather just that we are in the vicinity. It was particularly poignant being in Auriesville (the Shrine of the North American Martyrs) after celebrating their feast just two days prior. The next day, Florence and I walked the path to the Ravine, where St. René Goupil's body was temporarily taken by St. Isaac Jogues to be buried later. Upon Fr. Jogues's return for the body, the river had washed it away.

St. Kateri has always been very special to me because of my deep affection for our Native American brothers and sisters. While I was really disappointed with the sparseness of Native cultural elements during the Masses, I was deeply touched by the outpouring of love and devotion for St. Kateri by non-Natives, of all ages. Most of the regular Native congregants at the two locations made the pilgrimage to Rome.

I would like to direct your attention to the website of Kevin Gordon, who created the beautiful portrait for the Vatican's canonization ceremony (www.st-kateri.com), which utilizes a vast number of Native symbols. I bought a copy of the portrait for my parish

church and it is dedicated to all of you, as well as those who have been reunited with our Divine Spouse.

In order to get a deeper knowledge of the life and times of St. Kateri, I highly recommend "*Saint Kateri, Lily of the Mohawks*" by Matthew & Margaret Bunson. After reading it, I believe today's teenagers who are at risk of suicide due to bullying could invoke St. Kateri because when bullied, she remained focused on Jesus.

I am eternally grateful to Florence for suggesting this trip as soon as the canonization announcement was made. It was a tremendously grace-filled experience to be with St. Kateri in her homeland. We are hoping to return sometime in the future and to have others join us.

From **Barb Swieciak**, Diocese of LaCrosse:

In the summer of 1982 I became acquainted with the life of Kateri Tekakwitha. Her life of hiddenness, holiness in the ordinary and extra ordinary day to day happenings, love for Our Lady and the union with the Cross of Christ have been a source of encouragement over the years. What a grace to see the life of this simple hidden virgin being recognized by the Universal Church as a Saint!

Rita Mawn, Diocese of Ogdensburg (NY) sent a copy of her diocesan paper's report of their "wonderful celebration of Saint Kateri." Rita wrote, "As you know, at our reservation here are her fellow Mohawks, and their presence at our ceremonies was momentous. Mohawks filled the left side of our cathedral, their drums and native dress and ceremonies enhanced our own. It is believed Saint Kateri came through Saranac Lake on her way to Canada, since they traveled by ancient canoe routes, still in use by sportsmen today."

In his remarks as recorded in the *North Country Catholic* paper, Bishop Terry LaValley wrote about Saint Kateri: "St. Kateri Tekakwitha shows us that with the blending of culture and faith, the seeds of God's word can take root and flower. The Lily of the Mohawks, as Blessed John Paul II reminded us in Toronto at World Youth Day in 2002, is 'an example of fidelity, a model of purity and love.' Native Americans have known terrible suffering through the generations. In St. Kateri, a woman of tremendous courage and profound faith, we have a heroine who shows us how an intense love of Christ can impel us to serve the hurting in our midst, even in an environment that rejects our faith. This Patroness of ecology and the environment teaches us how to love and respect the created world. St. Kateri, pray for us who are blind to the injustices that surround us." *continued on page 5*

From **Judith Stegman**, Diocese of Lansing: Magalis Aguilera and I quite unexpectedly had the graced opportunity to be given tickets for flights to Rome for the canonizations ceremony, and we experienced minor miracles in finding flights and housing, and being able to rearrange our schedules at the last minute. Our only regret was not being able to have all of you go with us! St. Peter's Square, and beyond, were filled with pilgrims from all parts of the world celebrating the newest saints. Magalis and I wore scarves given us by a German pilgrimage in honor of St. Anna Schaffer, even as we were seated among generous Filipinos rejoicing in honor of the new St. Pedro Calungsod and met others from New York there to honor St. Marianna Cope.

Our deepest prayers for each of you were prayed as we witnessed the elevation of our own virgin Kateri to sainthood. I was most impressed looking at the banners hanging from St. Peter's – seven people who were no doubt not seen as extraordinary by the world – honored now for their holiness by millions of people around the world. Praised be to God.

It was also enjoyable to meet our American sisters Barb Swieczak and Molly McCarrick on the streets of Rome, and to join consecrated virgins Maria Luisa Oefe, Ylva Weibull, and Jenna Cooper (studying in Rome) for pranzo. We have new intercessors in heaven above! Saint Kateri, pray for us.



Canonization Photo Gallery Fonda, NY & Rome, Italy



from the President's journal...

Praise to our Divine Spouse and to our Blessed Mother for guiding the publication of the first volume of our new series, available now on the USACV website. A word of gratitude is owed to Mary Kay Lacke for coordinating the endeavor among many consecrated virgins; the volume has been quite well received. We'll be working now towards being able to take credit card orders on our website, a step which will facilitate sales and permit marketing through other venues. Please pray that the Holy Spirit use the text to increase understanding of the vocation of consecrated virginity.

We're evaluating a potential Philadelphia site for the 2014 convocation of consecrated virgins; our East Coast virgins have said for many years that they would like to host the convocation. It's looking like a possibility.

Lastly, I offer a word of thanks to consecrated virgins for electing me once again as president of the USACV. By the grace of God, I will serve to the best of my ability for these next three years. Please keep in touch with your suggestions, offers of help, concerns, and prayers – all of which are deeply appreciated as together we follow our Beloved Spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Order of Virgins.

Consecration Announcements

United States

Upcoming: **Virginia Meyer**, 11am, Saturday, December 29, 2012, St. Matthew Catholic Church in Schaumburg, IL., at the hands of The Most Reverend Raymond E. Goedert, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Chicago. Please RSVP to Virginia at starstruckdance@att.net.

Argentina

November 25, 2012, **Maria Nilda Arguello**, Archdiocese of Resistencia, at the hands of Bishop Fabriciano Zigampa.

Germany

December 8, 2012, **Judith Belz**, Diocese of Rottenburg.



Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

Remembering Pope Benedict's Advent vigil for the unborn in 2010, I thought this might be a good time to say part of this prayer, in union with our Holy Father, for the lives of the unborn and their mothers,

especially since the life of the unborn is in great peril with the election of so many who are anti---life:

"Lord Jesus, You who faithfully visit and fulfill with Your Presence the Church... You who in the miraculous Sacrament of Your Body and Blood render us participants in divine Life and allow us a foretaste of the joy of eternal life; we adore and bless You. Prostrated before You, Source and lover of Life, truly present and alive among us, we beg You to reawaken in us respect for every unborn life, make us capable of seeing in the fruit of the maternal womb the miraculous work of the Creator; open our hearts to generously welcome every child that comes into life... Accompany the choices of legislative assemblies with the Light of Your Spirit so that peoples and nations may recognize and respect the sacred nature of life, of every human life... teach us all to care for orphaned or abandoned children so they may experience the warmth of Your charity, the consolation of Your divine Heart, together with Mary, Your Mother... in whose womb You took on our human nature. We wait to receive from You, our only true Good and Savior, the strength to love and serve life, in anticipation of living forever in You, in communion with the Blessed Trinity."

Let us pray together that everyone in the Church, Cardinals, Bishops, pastors, consecrated virgins, lay people, may take a stand and witness publicly and consistently to the sacredness of all life, beginning with conception to natural death. Amen



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asking that he free her from the shame of dying without succession; 8) there are exclamations of joy from the lips of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, when she learned she was with child and gave thanks to the Lord who had finally erased her shame among men. (Cfr. Vizmanos, Op. Cit., pages 7, 25-43)

We can infer from looking at these attitudes towards virginity or perfect continence that the Eternal Father had not yet revealed to the world through the Old Testament the excellence of virginity. And even as the psalms sang out the coming revelation of virginity, such a revelation had no practical meaning for those living in the Hebrew culture.

Saint Cyprian and other Fathers of the Church clarified that the concept of virginity among the chosen people was not meant as an ascetic practice; rather, virginity was to be a way of fecundity. Virginity was identified with the prosperous blessing of children from the Lord. In all of this history, we see that the people matured in an understanding of virginity as a precious fruit of a mature relationship with God. (Cfr. Saint Cipriano, *De habilus virginum*, XXXII, Saint Metodio, *Convivum decem virginum*, in Vizmanos, Op.Cit., pages 7-8).

Saint Ambrose wrote: “Who will deny that the very origin of virginity comes from heaven and it was not possible to find the gift of virginity in the world corrupted by original sin, until God himself took on human mortal flesh and came into this world. Then a Virgin conceived and the Word was made flesh... If Christ did not teach virginity, I would not accept it. But ‘some there are who have freely renounced sex for the sake of the kingdom of God,’ and there exists in reference to these words of the Lord a glorious host who stand for the kingdom of God. It was this same Lord who taught us to foster a deep desire for immaculate virginity.” (Saint Ambrose, op.cit, quoted in Vizmanos, op.cit, page 12, 14). “There is no room for doubt: the radiant host of virgins who followed the path of perfect chastity believed firmly that they were following the footsteps of Christ.” (Cfr. Vizmanos, op.cit. page 16).

Saint Jerome, too, taught of virginity, explaining that virginity is not opposed to marriage: “The married populate earth and Virginity populates heaven.” (Saint Jerome, *Advers Iovinianum*, lib I, n. 16: PL 23, 235). Saint Ambrose also explains that there are three different expressions of chastity among women. Married women are personified in Scripture by the chaste Susanne in the Book of Daniel. Widows are personified by Saint Luke in Anna, who waited in prayer for the coming of the Lord in the temple. The third expression is that of the Mother of God, whose chastity is perpetual and belongs to the most profound divine secrets. The first expression is in a garden; the second in the temple; the third and most excellent is in the secret interior place of the heart. (Saint Ambrose, *De Viduis*, C 4, N. 23-23: PL 16, 241 s.)

As we humbly receive this gift of virginity from him who has espoused us, let us offer it back to him in the interior place of our hearts, seeking only his presence, his will, his love.

Special announcement: Notice to all consecrated virgins connected with the State of New Jersey: Jewel Brennan is working with the NJ Dioceses’ Archive Commission on publication of a monograph on the History of the Renewal of Consecrated Virginity According to the Ancient Rite in New Jersey. She is requesting input from any consecrated virgin who is or has been connected with the state of New Jersey either by having been consecrated in New Jersey, or having been born or lived or worked in New Jersey. She also requests information concerning deceased consecrated virgins. The deadline for submission of information is on or before January 31, 2013. For detailed information, please contact **Jewel E. Brennan**, Ph.D., D. Min., PO Box 3427, Mercerville, NJ 08619 or at brennaje@shu.edu (preferred) or 609-585-2600 (office).



Image from the day of Canonization of
Saint Kateri Tekakwitha

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 plan to offer more in the future.

20 years:

Mary Kay Lacke, Diocese of Steubenville, consecrated December 31, 1992:

On October 11, 2012, I pulled myself out of bed at 3:00 AM and descended the stairs to my living room to tune into EWTN's coverage of the canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha. I joined the Vatican crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square and watched and prayed in awe as each one of the seven blessed was presented to the Holy Father for canonization. Each one was more stunning than the last. But my sister Kateri was my special focus. She became dear to me over the years that I have been part of the USACV. I grew to know and love her through some literature which Barb Sweciak lent me at our 2009 Convocation. I was so edified by St. Kateri's undying faith, her contemplative presence in the midst of her people, her heroic love for Christ whom she embraced as her Bridegroom and her steadfast charity even in the face of ridicule, contempt and treachery from members of her family. She taught me to embrace Christ in the world I live in and to reflect His love in the midst of my world as she did in hers. She inspired a zeal for souls that grows deeper in me each day.

This is a great year for me to be celebrating twenty years of consecration. It is fitting that St. Kateri was canonized at the beginning of this Year of Faith and that I am celebrating my anniversary during this year. It was the gift of faith that led St. Kateri in an ever deeper bridal mysticism in her relationship with Christ. It was the gift of faith that led me to be bound by Christ in a mystical union through the Consecration in 1992 and through that union to be bound to the Church in a whole new way. I love to return to the homily given at my Consecration which speaks of the holiness of the act of Consecration in which I received a grace to be exclusively centered on Christ who formed a bond

with me that is intimate, tender and irrevocable. I went forth in faith as a virgin to become one forever with Christ as a bride and bear abundant fruit as a mother raising up a spiritual family in union with our Holy Mother, the Church. At the same time, by my very vocation, I speak of the world to come where "there is no marrying nor giving in marriage." In union with Christ, my life is to be given over entirely to the Church in service of my brothers and sisters.

During these twenty years, I have had many opportunities to flesh out the homily from my Consecration. As an administrator in student life and campus ministry at Franciscan University of Steubenville, I had the best job in the world: its central purpose was to foster the deepening of faith among the student body. When I retired in 2002 to care for my aged mother, the Student Life staff gave me a mother's pin with all the twelve gems signifying the months of the year because they said it represented the many hundreds of children in whom I had fostered faith in Christ.

I met a new challenge to my life as a consecrated virgin upon retiring. Caring for my mother, who died in 2009, and for my dear friend Elsie Luke, a consecrated virgin who died of cancer in 2005, called for a seismic shift in the ways I was "united to Christ in service to the Church." My Divine Spouse led me to a deeper self-giving and a new level of charity that took everything I had to give and beyond. When my own inner resources ran out, the Lord's did not. He fostered in me a new surrender to Him and His way of Divine Mercy. He also gave me a new grace to be a more devout daughter of His Mother, who is teaching me, day-by-day, to follow in her footsteps.

I am blessed to be part of a strong faith community here in Steubenville. I am blessed to have so many sisters in the Lord who are consecrated virgins with whom I can serve the Church and deepen in my spousal relationship with Christ. After twenty years I can truthfully say that there is no fidelity like the Lord's and there is no better plan for my life than the one He has given me. I love being a consecrated virgin! Thank you, Dear Divine Spouse for your mercy to me!

Ten Years:

Mary Deborah Ugbene, originally from the diocese of Abakaliki in Nigeria, Western part of Africa and currently a medical student residing in Memphis Tennessee, consecrated October 4, 2002:

Spouse in the household of Christ!

It is amazing how time flies. Ten years already as the bride of Christ? If not that Judith sent me a reminder E-mail, I would not have remembered, that ten years is here. It only seemed like yesterday come and gone. Life to consecrated virginity is one of a kind that needs to be experienced to really grasp its richness. This life had made the meaning of the word of angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary more personal and meaningful to me. The angel said to Mary, "For nothing is impossible with God" (Lk 1: 37). All that was needed is my acceptance to say, the truthful YES as our Lady did, and His grace leads the way.

Each day begins with the morning offering of self in the Liturgy of the Hours, the meditation and the Holy Eucharist in the nearby Church chapel or a chapel located close to work place as the case may be. The mid-day prayer is always in car during lunch break. The evening and night prayers are usually at home alone with none but Thee My God sometimes after a dinner invitation; and evening came, and morning came, the next day. So the beauty and song of creation is made manifest in me and in you, the Spouse of Christ I believe. What am I saying?

I am ever grateful to God who called me to be a bride of Christ, in this vocation that is lived in the world. This also had shown me that, I am in the world but not of the world and am called to spray the sweet fragrance of Christ in the world. What more shall I ask of the Lord than to echo the immortal words of the Psalmist to "Dwell in His house all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple" (Ps. 27: 4).

I pray that we may live a life of grace worthy of Him and to be true ambassadors for Him through the maternal intercession of Blessed Virgin Mary Mother Christ and King. Amen!

Five Years:

Kaye Downing, Diocese of St. Augustine, consecrated November 25, 2007

Five Years of Pure Love

"Katharyn Downing" the gentle baritone voice rang out as my parish priest, Fr. Boddie summoned me to the altar in the name of Jesus. "You called Lord!" I replied. That was the beginning of a marriage to true love for it was on the Feast of Christ, the King five years ago that I was consecrated. I do not know why our Divine Spouse chose me but these five years have been the most blessed years of life. For me my consecration is a marriage. The perfect husband had come for me through this most beautiful of vocations that a woman can experience. He has always loved me from the day of my conception. He, who is pure love, has loved me even though I have not always shown pure love in return because of my sins. He continues to shower his love upon me. I will never be able to return the love given by Jesus. Five years ago, I knew that next to my life which would be an unwelcome offering, my virginity would be the greatest gift that I could give to Christ in pure love. He accepted my gift when he called me.

Like any marriage there have been ups and downs but because of it I have grown in my faith and in my love of God. I am very happy. Sometimes I believe through His love I am experiencing the bliss of eternal life. The sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation have become more personal and meaningful for me. For me, my prayer life and Eucharistic Adoration have become the focus of my life.

I pray for the day when He comes for me and I will be deemed worthy to be with Him for all eternally for I know that the best is yet to come. I thank my Divine Spouse for his love and for my vocation of a Consecrated Virgin Living in the World.

Rosie Capalad, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, consecrated Sept. 29, 2007

My reflection on my anniversary has already been written a year ago in *The Lamp* issue dated June 2, 2011. Allow me to reflect upon what has happened in the past year or so. It has been a year of joy, peace and rejoicing with the Lord. This year I finally came

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Anniversary Reflections continued

to understand the importance of my vocation, a vocation that calls for a love relationship especially with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I realize that in order to do great things for God, I must practice self-denial, remain humble and truly become a woman of prayer before anything else and at the same time share this love with every family of my parish.

As I reflect upon my experiences this past year, the call to love has been the most dominant development in my life. I was truly inspired by the new published book by Cardinal Raymond Burke on Enthronement as well as the book written by Fr. Harkin, which says, "In a time when the world divides families, Jesus said, I will bless the families where the image of my Sacred Heart is exposed and honored." My heart was taken by this book and I was motivated to initiate this ministry and promote it among my parish family. I started to pursue this endeavor in order to continue the mission that was revealed to St. Margaret Mary of Paray-le-Monial, France, in the year 1675.

In spite of my unworthiness, the gift of courage and perseverance encouraged me to launch this ministry. And so, with the generosity, love and support, unselfish time and untiring effort of our Notre Dame Church Pastor, Monsignor Rolando Diokno as the Enthronement officiating priest, I am humbled to also be coordinating the Sacred Heart enthronement schedule with those interested families in the Notre Dame Catholic Church Parish. Since we started on March, 2012, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary have been welcomed and its enthronement has made its way to the hearts and altars of the parishioners with currently 38 family membership and still counting.

I am grateful for the overwhelming support of the member families and the new friends that I have come to know. It has been a wonderful year, full of God's blessings!

Vickie Hamilton, Diocese of Santa Fe, consecrated June 5, 2007

This year, I celebrated my fifth anniversary as a Consecrated Virgin on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. My anniversary date and consecration feast fell on the same day once

again this year -- another gift from my Lord, who has showered me with so many. Although our Archbishop chose my consecration date, I often think that there really could be no better feast to celebrate my consecration to our Divine Spouse than this great feast of His love for us. My devotion to the Sacred Heart has grown over the last five years and I hope it will continue for years to come. His heart is such a tangible symbol of His infinite love and devotion to us. The saints devoted to His Sacred Heart have also become great favorites of mine, particularly dear St. Gertrude, and I have come to love praying the novena to the Sacred Heart whenever I am in need of a particular grace.

During discernment and over the last five years, I have also meditated on the two extremes of examples of wives found in the Old Testament: the good wife described in Proverbs 31, and at the other end of the spectrum, Gomer in Hosea. It is somewhat surprising that it does not seem that the Fathers used Proverbs 31 when writing on virginity. It certainly seems that she is a model for me in how I should serve my Divine Spouse. It may be that one or more of the Fathers did reference this passage, but I have not found the reference. This passage is clearly applicable taken literally, but I suspect, also spiritually and probably has much deeper meaning for me than I have been able to discern. On the other hand, there is Gomer. Even with her infidelities, she is such a favorite of mine. Over the last five years, I know that I have committed infidelities despite the great grace received at consecration, as I am sure we all have. And yet, God loves us in spite, and, I sometimes think, because of our weaknesses. But it is words from Hosea that I pray twice a year when I begin silent retreats -- 'Dear Lord, take me into the desert and woo me.' And He always answers my prayer.

One Year:

Joyce Stolberg, Diocese of Colorado Springs, consecrated October 30, 2011:

Thank you for the invitation to share with our sisters a reflection on the first anniversary of my consecration. I was consecrated by Bishop Michael Sheridan, the brilliant and holy bishop of the thriving Catholic Diocese

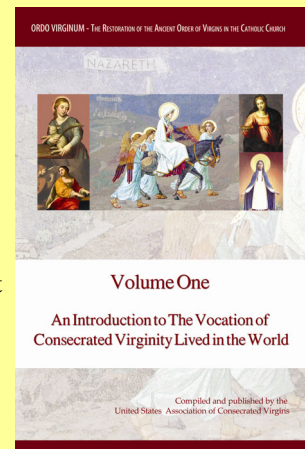
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Formation Resource Development Team – Mary Kay Lacke:

The third volume of ORDO VIRGINUM: The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Virgins In the Catholic Church is a volume on Virgin Saints. It is well underway with thirteen consecrated virgins contributing to the content. Each author has chosen a virgin saint to write about who was living in the world and not part of a specific religious family, e.g. a Franciscan, Dominican, Sister of Charity, etc.

Quite a few of the virgin saints chosen were martyrs in the early Church. All the virgin saints chosen by consecrated virgins for Volume Three are witnesses to the Church's esteem for the gift of virginity freely offered to Christ, the Bridegroom, in response to his invitation. Below is the final list of names that will appear in Volume Three. Along with Our Blessed Mother who will be written about by several authors, these are the virgin saints and their corresponding consecrated virgin writers.

Saint Agatha : [Loretta Matulich](#)
Saint Agnes: [Jenna Cooper](#)
Saint Apollonia: [Carolyn Blaszyk](#)
Saint Cecilia: [Mitzi Smith](#)
Saint Dymphna: [Paula Willenbrink](#)
Saint Eustochium: [Jeri Gerding](#)
Saint Kateri Tekakwitha : [Karen Bussey](#)
Saint Lucy: [Judith Stegman](#)
Saint Macrina: [Valerie Means](#)
Saint Maria Goretti: [Ann Stitt](#)
Saint Philomena: [Anne Gishpert](#)
Saint Suzanna: [Magalis Aguilera](#)
Venerable Pauline Marie Jarico: [Katie Gesto](#)



Concerning other volumes of ORDO VIRGINUM, because of a high demand for this work not only among potential candidates but also among Bishops and diocesan personnel, the next volume under consideration by the Formation Resource Development Team is the volume on discernment and formation in the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world. Any consecrated virgin who has a particular interest in helping with or giving input for this volume, please contact [Mary Kay Lacke](#).



The Ancora bookstore in Rome, which now carries our book as well as the book published by the German consecrated virgins!



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Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us!

Anniversary Reflections continued from page 10 of Colorado Springs, Colorado on October 30, 2011. Today at age 67, I am looking back on the happiest year of my life. I had read information concerning the effectiveness of this splendid, ancient sacramental; this past year I experienced it myself.

I had always given my heart to Jesus alone, first as a contemplative nun for approximately 11 years, then as a single person with a vow of perpetual chastity. (I still feel somewhat reluctant to acknowledge my time in religious life because in my reading of the literature I have sensed a prejudice against older former religious who "need a ceremony" to validate their commitment. Not so!) After I had spent the ensuing 37 years in lay Catholic life, Christ chose me to be his bride in an external manner: through this ceremony, the Church constituted me formally, publicly, and permanently in that state.

An overwhelming sense of awe at being offered such an astonishing, undeserved privilege was my strongest emotion. I was eligible for it (yes, I was scrutinized); I had prepared through prayer, study, retreat, spiritual direction, discernment, and in other ways, but I hadn't earned, and couldn't possibly ever earn the astounding grace and profound blessing that was poured out upon me. The Bishop, standing in the person of Christ, said to me, "Receive the ring that marks you as a bride of Christ." (Ceremony) I received a veil, a ring, and the book of the Liturgy of the Hours ----- vibrant symbols of my

new state in life and responsibilities. With a sense of humility, wonder, and privilege, I acknowledged, "I am espoused to him whom the angels serve!" (Ibid)

The effects of this ceremony were powerful and immediately evident. Confidence in God's love overflowed into a sense of confidence in handling everyday issues. I was gifted with a total freedom from the residual qualms that haunted me concerning vocational issues. The experience of God's presence in contemplative prayer has been stronger than ever. I am privileged to have as a spiritual director my own former pastor, who is now retired (as a senior priest). He knows me well and he advocated for me in the scrutiny. I am aware that this consecration has effects that will last for all eternity. I wonder: when a bride of Christ dies, whom will she meet first: her bridegroom or her judge? For the past 25 years or more, I have worked with parish RCIA processes (in addition to my day job), and I have summarized my lessons in my book, **God Calls You by Name** (USCCB conformity listed). Yet, because I have been a lifetime Catholic, I had never experienced the complex rites of initiation from the viewpoint of a participant. I have always encouraged people to experience the sacraments and related rites as effective formal expressions of God's choice and call. But now I have a whole new understanding of how the RCIA encounter with the sacred and with the community penetrates, strips, and re-adorns the soul.