

The Lamp



United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

May 31, 2014
Feast of the Visitation

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

Volume 19, Issue 2

May 31, 2014 Feast of the Visitation

The papacy has had a varied history. Many focus completely on the rather sordid lives of some of these leaders in the Middle Ages and the time of the Renaissance. But this year, what a blessing: we have a St. John XXIII, a St. John Paul the Great, and a Blessed Paul VI. Prior to this we have had papal saints only in Pius V and Pius X since the 1500s. What is going on here? Certainly, a great part of this is that we have had, in recent times, rather saintly popes, successors to Peter who are very prayerful, inspiring, and holy. The Holy Spirit, it seems, is showing us what leadership in the Church is to be and that is something that is a challenge to us all. In addition, these popes were not being good just so that they would be acclaimed as saints after their deaths. No, they truly wanted to be holy, to get to heaven, to live and die for the Church of Jesus Christ. They were willing to sacrifice themselves for the Bride of Christ.

It seems to me that the Holy Spirit truly has been visiting us from on high, showing us the way to abide in Christ, to remain firmly joined to the Vine so that we too can give our all to God in gratitude.

The canonization of anyone serves primarily to provide us with an example, so in this year of the popes, I invite all of us to find some quality in these saintly leaders which we feel God is calling us to emulate. Pray that we may, in fact, live that virtue in an heroic way. Then our lives will be a visitation of God to all we meet.

My sisters, happy feast day! Bring Christ to all!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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St. Marcelina

More on the virgin's veil

In the year 353 AD, Pope Liberius celebrated the consecration of the virgin Marcelina, sister of Saint Ambrose, in Saint Peter's Basilica. He prayed:

"May this your handmaid, who has been sheltered by the grace of virginity, appear before your altar not offering the flammeum of a worldly wedding, but offering the holy veil of her virginal consecration as the expression of her total belonging to Christ" (Vizmanos, pg. 183).

Cardinal Raymond Burke offers the following observation about the use of the veil in the current Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity:

"The veil is the most ancient of the insignia, representing the espousal of the virgin to Christ for ever. While the Rite indicates the option of not giving the veil, the option must probably be understood to refer to the situation of a professed nun who has already received the veil. The veil has the same significance for the virgin as it has for the bride in the Sacrament of Marriage. It is not a part of a religious habit, but a vesture which symbolizes the new reality of the consecrated virgin and may be worn by her from time to time, for instance at Mass on the anniversary of her consecration. Such a practice respects the state of the virgin living in the world." (*"Lex orandi, lex credendi: The Rite of Consecration and the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World,"* in *Ordo Virginum – The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Virgins in the Catholic Church, Volume One*, ed. USACV, pg. 56).

These quotes from the 4th and 21st centuries help us to reflect upon the significance of the veil in the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity. The veil is offered as a human sign of an eternal reality: the virgin is consecrated "bride of Christ." She belongs to Christ totally, forever. In the February 2014 issue of *Something Ancient, Something New* we introduced the ancient history of the virginal *flammeum*, and asked your thoughts about a photo of Judith wearing a red "eternity" veil. Not surprisingly, we received many thoughtful responses. In this issue we will discuss these responses as we continue to explore the historical meaning of the veil by looking at the accounts of early virgins, especially Marcelina and Demetrias, through the writing of Francisco Vizmanoz, SJ, in his work *Las vírgenes cristianas de las Iglesia primitiva* (Christian Virgins in the Early Church).

The veil as insignia of consecration

"Dearest daughters, receive the veil and the ring that are the insignia of your consecration. Keep unstained your fidelity to your Bridegroom, and never forget that you are bound to the service of Christ and of his Body, the Church" (Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, #25). We do not know when the Church adopted the symbol of the veil to represent the hidden mysteries in matrimony, but the veil had been in use in ancient Greek and Etruscan nuptial rites, and the Romans kept the veil as a symbol of the conjugal union. What was the appearance of the early virginal veil? More research is necessary. The flammeum – more of an orange color than red – served as a strong reminder of the spiritual martyrdom involved in the offering of virginity, but it was the white veil that soon prevailed as the insignia for the consecration of virgins. Depicted with this article is an image rendered of St. Marcelina after she received the veil in 353 AD. We are also grateful to [Mary Therese Wyant](#) for passing along the enclosed image from the publication "Mary's Shrine" of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, in D.C. The caption in the bulletin reads "*Virgo Deo Consecrate*, the vesting of a virgin with a veil is similar to the fresco in the catacombs of Priscilla, 3rd century." *continued on page 4*



"*Virgo Deo Consecrate*" - Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Council News

Current council members and officers are:

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

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

Margaret Flipp, Treasurer, 2014–2016, Archdiocese of San Francisco

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

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

Announcements:

2014 Membership Drive: **Magalis Aguilera** notes that many have renewed membership in the USACV for 2014. Registration forms were mailed or emailed in March to members and friends. Forms are available on the USACV website. We appreciate your renewals.

Family Album Update – Vickie Hamilton:

I have sent out letters to the virgins I was unable to contact via email requesting permission to use materials in the family album. I have begun pulling the pages together and still hope to have it available for the convocation this year.

Upcoming issues of The Lamp:

September 8, 2014 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 12, 2014 Our Lady of Guadalupe

February 2, 2015 Feast of the Presentation and World Day of Consecrated Life

May 31, 2015 Trinity Sunday

Upcoming events:

2014 National Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins

July 28–August 1, 2014

Malvern Retreat House

Malvern, PA

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

See announcement on page 8 for more information. Registration form available on USACV website.

2014 National Information Conference

August 5–August 8, 2014

Malvern Retreat House

Malvern, PA

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

See announcement on this page for more information. Registration form available on USACV website.

Information Conference 2014 Announcement:

Planning for the 2014 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World, August 5–8, is well underway with registrations coming in from various parts of the United States. It is not too late to sign up for the Conference.

The deadline for registration and payment is July 7, 2014. Please encourage attendance by anyone who you think would benefit from the Conference.

As listed in the flyer available at www.consecratedvirgins.org, the Conference is designed to address those who want to find out more about the vocation, including:

Women who are considering or preparing for the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world.

Bishops,

Priests and seminarians,

Vocation directors and Spiritual directors,

Consecrated virgins who have never attended the Information Conference before.

The cost for the Conference is \$350, which includes the registration fee and room and board. The Conference will be held at the beautiful Malvern Retreat House in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. An informational flyer and registration form are available at www.consecratedvirgins.org.

For questions concerning the Conference, please contact: Conference Coordinator, Theresa Marshall, Tel. 734-332-4648; email. marshallcv@gmail.com

–Mary Kay Lacke

Check out photos of the Retreat Center page 10!



Demetrias, consecrated 413 A.D.

Vizmanos examined the words of the ancient propositum to virginity in light of the life of the virgin Demetrias, as told by St. Jerome and confirmed by Origen. The authors concurred that in both East and West, there were two essential parts to the holy oath: besides the positive direct offering of virginity, there was also a negative oath of renunciation involved in virginity – the act of selflessness. The virgin Demetrias exemplified such a life. With the sack of Rome in 410 A.D., Demetrias left Rome with her mother Juliana and her paternal grandmother Proba and traveled to Carthage, where the noblewomen underwent many trials, including imprisonment. It was in Carthage that Juliana and Proba came in contact with Augustine of Hippo, who assisted them in the Christian life.

Demetrias was about 15 years old in 413 A.D., and on the path to marriage, but she herself was influenced by Augustine and secretly lived an ascetic way of life. She feared telling her choice to her family, not wanting to displease them, but as the date of her marriage drew near, she told her mother Juliana and grandmother Proba about her intention to renounce marriage and to take the veil. St. Jerome reports their joy: “Both women could hardly believe that true which they had longed to be true. Their voices stuck in their throats, and, what with blushing and turning pale, with fright and with joy, they were a prey to many conflicting emotions. . . Mother and child, grandmother and granddaughter kissed each other again and again. The two elder women wept copiously for joy, they raised the prostrate girl, they embraced her trembling form. In her purpose they recognized their own mind, and congratulated each other that now a virgin was to make a noble house more noble still by her virginity” (St. Jerome Letter (#133) to Demetrias).

In 413 A.D., Demetrias took the veil in a ceremony celebrated by Bishop Aurelius of Carthage. It is said that to assist her in living the virginal life, Juliana and Proba asked several churchmen to send letters of advice to Demetrias. These letters are treasures for virgins of all ages. Augustine answered suggesting the reading of his *De sancta virginitate*. Jerome responded with a long letter offering advice, his letter #133, and it seems that even Pelagius, a theologian opposed by Augustine, addressed to her a treatise, *Epistola ad Demetrium*. Later in her life, Demetrias returned to her native city of Rome, and received the *Epistola ad Demetrium de vera humilitate*, attributed to Pope Leo I.

Marcelina, consecrated 353 A.D.

Vizmanos reports the holy propositum (resolution) spoken by the virgin Marcelina at the time of her consecration by Pope Liberius, “I renounce your works, oh Satan! I renounce the pomp of this century and its seductions. I promise to lessen my bondage to the flesh, and I swear that when offered any human enticement, which I declare I don’t desire, I will remain uncontaminated and virgin, bride of Christ forever.” Pope Liberius accepted the propositum of the virgin and prayed the consecratory prayer with extended hands. The prayer is familiar – many phrases bring to mind the current prayer of consecration. We will quote here that segment having to do with the veil and its nuptial meaning:

“I commend her to Thee with fatherly affection, so that supportive and vigilant, Thou might grant her the grace to attract her Spouse, who dwells in the sanctuary of the heavenly thalamus, to contemplate Him face to face and to be introduced in the dwelling place of God her King. . . May this your handmaid, who has also been sheltered by the grace of virginity, appear before your altar not offering the flammeum of a worldly wedding, but offering the holy veil of her virginal consecration as an expression of her total belonging to Christ. Dress up your servant with garments permanently immaculate in her being. . . add to that, Lord, the attire of holy virginity. . . give her the beauteous ornaments of a pious and diligent life. . . Come then, Oh Lord Jesus, on the day of Your nuptials and receive who was already consecrated to you in her spirit and to-day is consecrated in virtue of profession of her virginity; fill her with the knowledge of thy law; choose her for eternal life, sanctifying her in her spirit with the faith of your truth so she can be a holy instrument of thy glory.”

At a signal from the Pope, the deacon took the veil and placed it in the hands of the newly consecrated. The veil was a broad white cloth edged with purple stripes and fringe. The Bishop (the Pope is the Bishop of Rome) placed the veil over the head of the newly consecrated virgin, reciting the short prayer, “Receive, daughter, the veil that you must carry without stain before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee bends in heaven, on earth, and in hell.” Vizmanos reports that this formula is preserved in the *Missale gallicanum vetus* compiled in the late seventh or early eighth century, and is repeated in most of the pontifical sacramentaries of the ninth and tenth centuries. (Vizmanos, pp. 186-188.) *continued page 5*

“The Veiled Virgin,” a sculpture carved by Italian sculpture Giovanni Strazza sometime in the mid 1800’s. It was transported to Newfoundland in 1856 and installed first in the Bishop’s Palace, and later moved to The Presentation Convent when it was given to the Bishop’s sister as a gift.

In a physical description, it is a 20” bust of a female executed in Cararra marble. Visage as well as hair and clothing are visible through a continuous marble veil.



Demetria, Licinia, Leoncia, Ampelia, Flavia, Elsie

Vizmanos explains that at the receiving of the sacred veil, the virgin was deeply stirred in her being by the thought of divine judgment – and yet it is at the time of death that this influence is manifest. The epitaphs of graves often speak as a deposit of hope and assurance of a purpose fulfilled. An inscription in Milan in the year 409 A.D. reads, “Here is **Demetria**, with veiled head, after living twenty one years and one month” (*Corporus inscriptionum latinarum* vol. n. 6257). And even more excitement is contained in the epitaph of the four sisters, **Licinia, Leoncia, Ampelia**, and **Flavia**: “...after having overcome the harmful poisons, helped by Christ as their medicine, distinguished by the chastity of their soul, with the holy veil over her hair, those four sisters went to heaven” (*Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*, vol. V n. 6731). We add the name of a virgin of our time whose tombstone request some virgins were so pleased to answer after her burial. Her tombstone now reads: **Elsie J. Luke**, 1922 – 2005, *Sponsa Christi*.



Readers respond

Readers were impacted by the red color of the pictured veil, by the “eternity” style of the veil, and by the thought of the consecrated virgin in today’s world wearing this style and color veil, or any veil, for private or public prayer. It is also clear from the responses that the cultural diversity both within the United States, and in other countries, significantly impacts a person’s reaction to seeing a virgin wearing a veil of any sort. Because our vocation is lived *in the world*, readers are rightly concerned about the message that is conveyed with the wearing of the veil. At the same time, our life is not *of the world*, and readers are aware that we live as witnesses to the “eschatological image of the world to come” (Rite of Consecration, #1).

A number of responses pointed out that the red color and particular style of the eternity veil could readily be misinterpreted as a Muslim jilbab. Others noted that the wearing of any mantilla or veil by a Catholic woman is often misinterpreted as a sign that one holds on to past practices and would advocate that all Catholic women should wear a head-covering during Mass. Others noted that they did not receive the veil during the Consecration ceremony for the very reason that they did not want to be misinterpreted as a woman religious.

Marion Strishock, a consecrated virgin of the Archdiocese of Washington (D.C.), summarized well the concerns that were expressed: “I wanted to give you my feedback regarding the eternity veils. The only reminder of our consecration should be the ring on our finger. A married woman does not wear a veil in public to remind her of her marriage. We are called to live the hidden life of Mary, not drawing attention to ourselves but to the light of Christ. It is one thing to wear a veil during Mass, as a sign of humility before God. Although the eternity veil is not worn on the head in public, it is still very distinctive and draws attention to oneself. It says look at me rather than look at how I live. Our vocation puts us in the world, not removed from it, so we should not wear a special garment. That is meant for someone living in community. I have heard of bishops who are hesitant to support the vocation because of consecrated virgins who have dressed differently as though they were religious. What we do can impact another woman’s ability to be consecrated in the future.”

Marion’s comments echo the words of Cardinal Burke in regard to the wearing of the veil – it is an ancient and important symbol of espousal to Christ, to be worn in humility and not in daily life. Often as we virgins are gathered together for Holy Mass or in prayer at a Convocation or at a celebration of the Rite of Consecration, a number choose to wear a mantilla (usually white) or other veil as an outward expression of our lives lived as brides of Christ. Some wear a veil or mantilla to daily Mass in their parish. The February article in *Something Ancient, Something New* inspired some consecrated virgins to begin to wear a white veil to Mass or in personal prayer, again, as an expression of their own espousal to Christ.

As a final note, Judith did receive an email from a Jesuit priest in Mexico who saw the photo. He wrote, “it made me think of Jesus’ Blood covering His spouse, and also of His infinite love for His virgin spouses, and of the

love they have for Him.” It is this Judith is reminded of as she sometimes wears the red veil, only in private prayer. When consecrated virgins gather, as we did in Rome in 2011 to celebrate Magalis’ 25th anniversary of consecration, the joyful virgins from each country were pleased to wear the white mantilla as the ancient sign of our espousal to



from the President's journal . . .

Praised be Jesus Christ! These past few months have been full: working with other consecrated virgins to plan details for our summer 2014 conferences, answering a variety of questions concerning our vocation, and studying. What a great grace it is at this moment in life to have the gift of time to study theology and to concentrate on the meaning of our vocation of virginity in the life of the Church.

As I work now on my thesis, I realize how much more deeply I am coming to understand Christian virginity as a gift - a gift to the Church in witness to eschatological realities beyond life in this world. Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

I hope to see many of you in Philadelphia this summer!

Judith Stegman

Consecration Announcements:

Argentina:

April 30, 2014, **Laura Di Matteo**

France:

January 5, 2014, **Laurence Dubois**, Diocese of Autun, Chalon, & Macon, at the hands of the His Excellency Benoit Riviere.

March 2, 2014, **Florence Noel**, Archdiocese of Bordeaux and Bazas, at the hands of His Eminence Jean-Pierre Cardinal Ricard.

March 22, 2014, **Pascale Claire Cyrot**, Diocese of Beauvais, at the hands of His Excellency Jacques Benoit-Gonnin.

Italy:

February 2, 2014, **Alessandra Agatea**, Diocese of Chioggia, at the hands of His Excellency Adriano Tessarollo.

Switzerland:

December 8, 2013, **Christine Durret**, Diocese of Lausanne.

Life Corner –

Florence Sundberg

“If we would kill the innocent baby in the womb, what would we not do?”

This is something that Mother Theresa of Calcutta said often. Are we now seeing the truth of Mother Theresa's words? We are seeing Christians being persecuted for their faith worldwide: most recently we learned about Meriam Ibrahim imprisoned and sentenced to

death by hanging in Sudan because she refused to renounce her Christian faith. Meriam is 8 months pregnant. A representative of our country stated: “Such blatant disregard for the value of human life and religious freedom is an intolerable disgrace.” But here in our own country we are ourselves experiencing the erosion of religious freedom and the ‘blatant disregard for the value of human life’ with the ongoing extermination of human babies in the womb.

Just because an action has been made legal does not mean it is morally justified. Recently I watched the film: “Judgment at Nuremberg” where one of the prisoners, a Judge, declared that he never knew it would come to that, to the extermination of millions of human beings. The American judge replied: “It came to that the first time you sentenced a man to death believing he was innocent.” And: “This is what we stand for: justice, truth and the value of a single human being.” Pope Saint John Paul also told us that we have lost the sense of the uniqueness and sacredness of each and every human life. We must be indefatigable in our defense of human life and of religious freedom.

Our own patron, Saint Kateri, had to flee her people and her homeland in order to be able to live her Christian faith without opposition. Christians are abandoning their homelands in the Middle East and elsewhere because they are being persecuted, imprisoned, put to death. As consecrated virgins called to live in the world among the people of God, let us strive to make known the precious and sacred value of each and every human life, created by God and bearing His Image, His blessings and His gifts for all humanity.



Consecration Anniversary Reflections

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

15 Years:

Cherie Cashen, Diocese of Palm Beach, consecrated March 20, 1999

In the 1980's, I attended the Franciscan University of Steubenville and I met The Sisters of The Good Shepherd in Ohio. I attended a vocation retreat and at this retreat they talked about their active branch, contemplative branch, and a group of single women that were Companions of the Good Shepherd. These women made vows and lived the same spiritually but they did not live in community with the sisters.

Hearing about the Companions was the first time I was introduced to the idea that there existed within the church a vocation of making vows to God as a single person without becoming part of a religious community. I went into the chapel later that day to have some quiet time and as I prayed, the idea that God was calling me to live a vocation that would involve vows but would not include being part of a religious community became very strong, so strong, that I started to cry. And, I cried so hard the vocation director quickly closed the chapel door and took the rest of the people downstairs.

It was in that chapel that God planted deeply within my heart the idea God was inviting me to consider the kind of life I had heard about earlier that day: living a public consecration individually in the world. My initial response to such a new idea was shock, disappointment and intrigue all at the same time. In 1987, I had never heard of the Rite for the Consecration of Virgins or the USACV. I just knew that God was leading me in a direction that seemed unusual. I went to work for the Good Shepherd Sisters at their school for girls and continued the process of discernment. After finishing my degree, I became aware that I had a lump growing in my neck and returned home to Florida where my family was living. I was diagnosed with stage two thyroid cancer. During the time of illness, when I prayed about my vocation, I heard over and over the words, I'm *raising up a righteous branch, an ancient rite*.

I had no clue yet what this meant but I asked God to not let me die without becoming His bride, without having the opportunity to give myself completely to Him. Soon after, I met a Sister of Saint Joseph who was in charge of a new diocesan ministry for people with intellectual disabilities. I took a job in the group homes and lived with her. I confided to her my long-standing desire to be consecrated to God. She introduced me to Bishop John Snyder, the Bishop of

St. Augustine, who agreed to study the canon law and oversee my formation as a consecrated virgin. After a formal process of preparation, on March 20, 1999, we celebrated my Rite of Consecration. It was the happiest day of my life. I have never felt such joy, and doubt I will again until heaven. Looking back 15 years later, I am so grateful to God for making the way for me to become a consecrated virgin. It simply makes me feel complete, in the center of God's will and heart.

5 Years:

Catherine Wright, Archdiocese of San Francisco, consecrated April 29, 2009

Even before I knew that the vocation of consecrated virginity existed, I imagined myself walking the streets of San Rafael wearing a ring that represented my relationship with Christ. Today, five years after my consecration, I see my ring, not only as a pledge to Jesus, but also as a bond with two Marys—with the Blessed Virgin as mother and with Mary Magdalene as witness.

Mary's first act of service was to wait with Elizabeth as she anticipated the birth of John the Baptist. How often I think of Mary's journey towards Elizabeth and the time they spent together! Now she waits with me as I accompany the members of my parish's RCIA program on their journey toward baptism at the Easter Vigil. Sometimes the months before the Vigil seem very long, with all the uncertainty of an actual, physical birthing. But then Mary's eternal "yes" to God calls me back, giving me the patience and trust to keep going. And each year, my "children" are baptized, becoming Mary's children far more than mine.

It's at Easter, too, that we hear the story of Mary Magdalene, of how she runs to tell the apostles that Jesus has risen from the tomb. When I explain our vocation to the RCIA each year, I always emphasize that the One whose ring I wear is alive. "Jesus is alive," I tell them with all the passion of Mary Magdalene. "No woman betroths herself to a man who has died." I see the startled look on their faces and wonder if I've gone too far. I wonder if my words and actions truly witness to this reality that impels my life forward. But the apostles didn't believe Mary Magdalene at first, either. I can only love Jesus, one day at a time, and hope that others see Him through me. Christ *is* alive. Now and always.



2014 Council Elections Announcement

One USACV Leadership Council position, **At-Large Representative**, will open January 1, 2015. Details of our governing structure can be found in the organizational statutes and bylaws of the USACV, which are available upon request. In summary, what you need to know for this election:

Election Process

Written notification of a member's desire to run for the open Council position must be received by midnight on Friday, October 31, 2014. We encourage each candidate to also submit a biographical statement (approx. 500 words), including remarks about her own life as a consecrated virgin and why she desires to serve in the position. Details of the election process will be announced in the September newsletter.

Position Terms, Descriptions and Responsibilities

At Large Representative

Term: January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2017.

Eligibility to run for office (Article III Section D3): Open to any current voting member who has been a member or actively involved in the Association for the two previous years.

Duties (Article V Section A):

To collaborate with other council members in the governance of the USACV in accord with the provisions of the organizational statutes, with particular focus on the ecclesial objectives (Article II) of the Association.

To make every effort to attend the annual membership meeting and the annual council meeting held with the Episcopal Moderator. To participate in other council meetings or discussions as needed.

If serving as the council representative on a standing committee, to facilitate ongoing communication between the council and the committee.

If elected as an At-Large Representative, to make every effort to accept an appointment as Vice President (Article V Section C) or Secretary (Article V, Section D), recognizing that some responsibilities of the offices may be delegated to others (Article IV, Section A).

Other Notes:

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

The Association's travel budget currently covers accommodations and meals for Council members during the annual Council meeting with our Episcopal Moderator.

Council members also meet quarterly by telephone conference call.

2014 Convocation Announcement:

Who is the Consecrated Virgin Living in the World? How does she witness to chaste and fruitful love in the world? These questions will be considered as consecrated virgins gather July 28 to August 1, for days of prayer, convivium, catechesis, and discussion at the 2014 Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins.

The Convocation is open to all consecrated virgins, of any country. Candidates for the consecration who have attended a previous Information Conference are also welcome to attend.

The cost for the Convocation is \$430 (private room) or \$500 (single room), which includes the registration fee and room and board. The Convocation will be held at the beautiful Malvern Retreat House in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

The annual Convocation is being held in the East for the first time in many years, and we expect to see a number of new faces. Please gather with us to enjoy the company of other consecrated virgins as we encourage one another in our love for Jesus!

For a full description, please see the Convocation brochure, registration form, and detailed schedule, available at www.consecratedvirgins.org. For questions concerning the Convocation, please contact: Conference Coordinator, **Anne Gishpert**, Tel. 970-323-8779; email, agishpert@q.com.

Check out photos of the Retreat Center on page 10!

Special notes from consecrated virgins:

Karen Lombardi, consecrated February 2, 2014, Archdiocese of Kansas City, writes about her consecration: "I was blessed to receive the Consecration of a Virgin Living in the World at the hands of Archbishop Joseph Naumann on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. Exactly three years before (on February 2, 2011), I had handed Archbishop Naumann my letter requesting that I be considered for the consecration. Of course, my journey towards this vocation started long before that. You can read a bit about this journey in the article recently printed in *The Leaven*, the newspaper for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, (<http://www.theleaven.com/v35/v35n27virgin.html>). February 2, 2014 was a day of grace for me. I was filled with such peace and joy throughout the Mass and the celebrations that followed. It was beautiful to see and hear that those same graces were experienced by those in attendance!



As Archbishop Naumann prayed the Prayer of Consecration over me, the familiar words that I have prayed daily for years were now more than just a beautiful prayer, they were *effective* and they defined who it is that I am from that moment on. I smile every time I now look at my left hand and see my ring . . . a reminder of that moment and of God's fidelity. I know that I will continue to "grow into" this vocation. I know that the Lord will teach me more and more about the depth of the call to consecrated virginity and how to live this call more faithfully. Most of all, I know that I was as ready as He was calling me to be for the moment of my consecration and that, in His faithfulness, He will prepare me and give me the graces I need for all that this "yes" will mean in the future. I want to extend my gratitude to the consecrated virgins and those discerning the vocation who were in attendance. Special thanks to

consecrated virgins **Cheri Bowe**, who participated in the Rite as one of my witnesses, and to **Shalina Stilley**. And thanks to all of you for your prayers and your witness!"

Joani McCann, consecrated virgin of Boston, passes along this personal witness about the Holy Hours and Eucharistic procession held on May 12 in response to the "black mass" planned by a student group at Harvard University:

Thank you to all the virgins who joined in prayer. In case you didn't see the coverage of the event, it is estimated that two to three thousand people showed up, and thousands were united with us from around the world! Our Beloved Lord was adored and glorified, and the black mass sponsored by the student group was cancelled. Hundreds of people, who happened to be randomly walking down Massachusetts Avenue, just stopped and kneeled. At one point, we passed a train stop as a crowd of people came up from the underground station. They were in awe as Jesus in the monstrance was passing by, just as they came out. People in cars going by, beeping and waving, many in amazement seeing this massive crowd led by priests and consecrated people peacefully walking through an area know for its extreme liberalism. Everyone was prayerful and peaceful. We were there, united in our love for the Lord, in reparation for the sins committed against Him. Thank you for being with us in prayer.



Mary Jo Gretsinger, consecrated virgin living in Nigeria, recently asked prayers of the consecrated virgins for the holy success of her planned project to commission artwork for the grounds of the seminary where she teaches. She wrote to share her story and a photo:

I wanted to do something to mark my 70th birthday, and after looking around the grounds of the seminary, I realized that there was not a single outdoor statue of any kind (ours is the youngest and smallest in Nigeria). Of course, it made sense to me to go for a statue of the Good Shepherd since the seminary is called Good Shepherd Major Seminary. I made some inquiries and could not find any statue of the Good Shepherd already made. It was then that I chose an artist to make the statue and asked everyone to pray for the artist that the Holy Spirit would truly inspire him. As you can see, all of our prayers were answered, and tomorrow (May 8), the statue will be unveiled and blessed.



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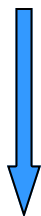
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**Join us this summer at Malvern
Retreat Center near Philadelphia
for one of our conferences!**

**See more photos in February 2014
edition.**



*O virgin, lovely flower,
You will not remain much longer in this world.
Oh, how beautiful your loveliness,
My pure bride!*

*No numbers can count you.
How dear is your virginal flower!
Your brightness is in no way dimmed;
It is brave, strong, invincible.*

*The very blaze of the noon-day sun
Dims, and darkens in the presence of a virgin heart.
I see nothing greater than virginity.
It is a flower taken from the Divine Heart.*

*O gentle virgin, fragrant rose,
Although there are many crosses on earth,
No eye has seen, nor has it entered into the mind of man
What awaits a virgin in heaven.*

*O virgin, snow-white lily,
You live wholly for Jesus alone
And in the pure chalice of your heart
Is a pleasing dwelling place for God Himself.*

*O virgin, no one will sing your hymn.
In your song lies hidden the love of God.
Even the Angels do not comprehend
What the virgins sing to God.*

*O virgin, your flower of paradise
Eclipses all the splendors of this world.
And although the world cannot comprehend you,
It bows humbly before you.*

*Although the virgin's path is strewn with thorns,
And her life bristles with many a cross,
Who is as brave as she?
Nothing will break her; she is invincible.*

*O virgin, earthly angel,
Your greatness is renowned throughout the Church.
You stand guard before the tabernacle
And, like a Seraph, become all love.*

passed along by **Mary Kay Lacke**

From *Divine Mercy in My Soul: DIARY of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*,
Stockbridge: Marian Press, pp. 612-613. Notebook VI: #1735