

The Lamp



United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

February 2, 2010
Feast of The Presentation
of the Lord

Volume 15, Issue 1

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

February 2, 2010 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

When I was first attracted to the priesthood, I was about seven years old. From then until I was fourteen, when I finally entered the High School Seminary, I guess what drew me on toward the priesthood was my pastor. I watched him say Mass. I heard him deliver sermons. I saw him intermingle with various groups in the parish. I was impressed.

I was impressed with the Mass, with moving people by words, and with how easily and joyfully he dealt with people. This is what I wanted to do. Now these motivations were at a very superficial level in my life at the time. And the depth of the reasons for pursuing the priesthood, as well as their particular articulation, changed greatly during my time in the seminary. Why I was eventually ordained is due to both different and deeper reasons than those of a seven year old or a fourteen year old. Why I remain a priest today is for reasons both different and deeper than those of a twenty-seven year old. This does not surprise me in the least. God uses those feelings and attractions to draw us to his will that we can most readily see and acknowledge at any given time in our lives. God then adds to these and deepens them over time. Some reasons, which may have been superficial indeed, recede greatly in importance.

Presumably, similar experiences have been yours. Consecrated virginity in its restored state is a relatively new experience. Thus there may not have been many models for you to see and to emulate. Still, I presume there was someone whose virginity impresses you and thus who provides you a certain amount of modeling.

Yet, the response to this circumstance really should be for whom are you being a model of consecrated virginity? I needed my pastor. Someone out there needs each of you. How to be that model in the world is certainly a challenging proposition and probably requires on our part some good conversations with our spiritual director.

Another lesson to learn from my experience is to examine how we grow in our vocation, how God deepens our calling and our commitment. Your virginity has been with you for your whole life. At those times when it was acknowledged by yourself, what were the reasons and what were the values you attached to it? How has God deepened those reasons and values over the course of your life, especially during your preparation for consecration and subsequently as you have lived this in the world? What motivations have receded in importance over time?

On this great feast of the Presentation, the feast day of those living a consecrated life, it is of great benefit to reflect upon how God has been working in us over the years—see that divine hand at work and give thanks and remain in awe as well. Happy Feast Day.

Sincerely yours in Christ

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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Special Points of Interest:

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As Magalis and I write this article each month, Magalis researches “something ancient,” and I work with her notes and attempt to add “something new.” For this particular column, after being involved in discussions with a number of our consecrated virgins, Magalis took a closer look at the early *Order of Virgins*. What did it mean to be part of this “Order,” at a time that preceded the development of vowed religious communities? What do we know about the relationships of our sisters with one another in the early Church?

She found a myriad of historical data on the virgins of the early Church, virgins who lived even before several rites for consecrating virgins appeared during the 5th to 8th centuries. It was with these official rites that the *Ordo virginum* was established by the Church. Virgins who received consecration through the hands of the Bishop were consecrated into the *Ordo virginum*, a distinct grouping of persons in the Church. The Rite of Consecration became part of the Roman Pontifical, with the eventual restoration of the rite for the Consecration of Virgins Living in the World, coming on May 31, 1970.

Our virginal vocation is as ancient as the Church herself is. We know through the Holy Scriptures that the Deacon Philip had four virgin daughters, and the historian Eusebius (263-339) tells us two of them persevered in their propositum until death. There are many indications that since the first century, virginity has been observed as a state of life. A letter of St. Ignatius of Antioch (1st Century), for example, refers to virgins making vows or promises as were made by widows. And he notes that the virgins were not fed by the Church, that they remained in their paternal homes, and that they lived under the authority of the Bishop.

There exists in the integrated human being a *need* to belong – it’s a natural part of having our origin in the Triune God. Through our baptism, we are called into the community of saints, and we are taught by Mother Church to stay in prayer, together with our brothers and sisters, as we await resurrection into our eternal home.

Bishop Methodius of Olympus gives a glimpse of this sense of belonging among the virgins who lived in his day, in the midst of a pagan culture. Writing around the year 300, his book, [The Banquet of the 10 Virgins](#), was addressed to a sizeable group of virgins in Asia who came together in the middle of daily duties to share together the graces of their virginity by prayer, spiritual reading, and study of the Holy Scriptures. He wrote to encourage social relationships among the virgins, as a way to edify one another and to keep them from being involved in pagan customs and empty conversations. Young virgins had to have their meals at their parent’s homes, but others could go from home to share meals and good conversations together.

Social interactions among the virgins regularly concluded with spiritual conversations and the virgins often would go together to receive the counsel of their Bishops regarding ascetic, spiritual, and practical aspects of their living in the midst of the world. During the year 249, there were so many virgins in Asia and in Rome that Bishop Cipriano and the Bishop of Alexandria (among others) recommended to the youngest consecrated virgins that they receive instruction and spiritual assistance in living the ascetic life from the older ones. In the year 329, we see Saint Ambrose counseling his sister Marcela to not be as hard on herself, in her asceticism, in order to be more useful in her duty as teacher of the younger virgins, that she might better help them in the ascetic life that would assist them in guarding their purity.

Not only were the older virgins assisting the younger in their spiritual growth, but they also served as a support to them in times of distress, affliction, and disappointment. For their part, the youngest virgins discussed thoughts with the older virgins, received support in their struggles and looked to the older virgins as models to imitate, and as counselors. The Bishops recommended such relationships between the older and younger virgins, and the virgins embraced the interactions with one another, in the midst of their personal duties. We’d like to note that many of these observations come from the classic work by Francisco de B. Vizmanos, S. J., [Las Virgenes Cristianas de la Iglesia Primitiva](#) (Christian Virgins of the Ancient Church).

So what does this mean for us, to be consecrated into this ancient, and new, Order of Virgins? We belong to a family. We belong to a great family of virgins who, throughout history, have lived just as we live – with families or on our own, in the midst of an antagonistic culture. We are not a religious family with a charism to serve in the Church; rather, we are an *ordo*, a family, so to speak, of virgins living the gift of virginity we have received in the heart of our local diocesan Church. In the United States of America, we are fortunate to have an association to serve our vocation, but the association isn’t the Order of Virgins. By virtue of consecration at the hands of her Bishop, the virgin is linked to the Church as bride of Christ, linked with the company of virgins who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Fr. Vizmanos describes the distinct spirituality of the Order of Virgins as being like the spirituality lived by our Blessed Mother, in total contemplation of her Son. This is the life of the virgin – to set heart and mind on the things of the Lord, contemplating His face in the middle of daily life in this world, as she did. We find the way of asceticism in the daily purifications of minding our duties. We pray and seek always to be in His will. We are in constant search to learn mystical union within the Spousal mystery of our vocation. And we live the fullness of the spirituality of the local Church, embracing the daily readings of the Liturgy of the Hours, celebrating the memorials and feasts of the Church, living in her sacramental grace. It is a grace, an honor, and a privilege to be part of the Order of Virgins!

Council News

Current council members and officers are:

Judith M. Stegman, President, 2010 – 2012; Diocese of Lansing

Magalis Aguilera, 2010-2012, **Member-at-Large** (appointed **Vice-President** thru 2012); Archdiocese of Miami

Louise Pare, Treasurer, 2008 – 2010; Diocese of Lansing

Twanna Bolling, Member-at-large, 2008-2010 (appointed **Secretary** through 2010) Archdiocese of Chicago.

Shalina Stilley, Member-at-large, 2009-2011, Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Upcoming events:

2010 National Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins:

July 14-18, 2010

Mundelein Retreat and
Conference Center
Chicago area

2010 National Information Conference:

August 4 to 8, 2010

The Cenacle, Chicago
(brochure available at
www.consecratedvirgins.org)

Team Announcements:

Formation Resource Development Team:

an update from **Mary Kay Lacke**:

For well over a year, the FRDT has been working on a resource handbook for our vocation. The team has a working title for the document:

Consecrated Virginité Lived in the World, 'A Gift in the Church and for the Church.' The second part of the title, originating from Pope Benedict XVI, was the theme for the Rome 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage for Consecrated Virgins.

The team plans for the completed handbook to have four parts:

- Consecrated Virginité as a distinct charism and vocation in the Church;
- Understanding of "The Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginité for a Woman Living in the World";
- The Ordo Virginitum in the 1983 Code of Canon Law;
- Principles and resources for formation in the Vocation and living out the Vocation.

Each part will have a number of chapters that elucidate various topics appropriate for the particular part.

The team is still in the "formation" stage of writing the text but it hopes to progress towards the completion of the project in the near future. There is such a need for this resource in the USA!

Membership Team: **Shalina Stilley**. Please watch your In boxes for 2010 Member and Friend renewal notices. Coming soon!

Candidate Care Team: Just a reminder that you are invited to share your consecration day invitations, programs, photos, or to request that the travelling portfolio be sent to you. Contact **Barb Swieczak** at scwjoy@gmail.com or 1-608-788-7700.

2010 Convocation Team: Our theme, *Consecrated Virgins – in the world but not of the world*. Please contact **Louise Paré** at lepocv@gmail.com if you would like to help with the planning. *We must work in the world, yet without being immersed in it.* (1 Cor. 7:31)

Website Team: I'll repeat the announcement from our December issue – work is progressing on the new website, but slowly. Please let Judith Stegman know if you are interested in helping with the new site. Any degree of website knowledge, from none to extensive, qualifies you to assist, if you have ideas and love sharing our vocation! Karen Hund has collected Rome 2008 images to post to the new site, and Karen has agreed to begin interviewing various consecrated virgins and writing about how the Holy Spirit is inviting each of us to live and express our virginal vocations. With permission, these stories may be used in future editions of "The Lamp" or on our new website.

Recordings Team: **Magalis Aguilera** reminds us that 2009 convocation and informational conference recordings are available, as are DVD's of Judith Stegman's appearance on *Life on the Rock*. Please email info@consecratedvirgins.org for information.

Reflections of Consecrated Virgins

In this issue we continue to feature stories from virgins consecrated in the last year or two. Today we hear from several virgins consecrated this past year.

Margaret Flipp, January 21, 2010

Nearly a year ago I read an article in the San Francisco Catholic about a consecrated virgin. This reawakened a long-standing desire to be consecrated myself. Though I have lived most of my life in a vow of virginity, I wanted MORE! During my candidacy I followed interior inspirations to rid myself of possessions that seemed incompatible with this hoped-for state of life. My prayer life increased greatly, and I began very frequent Reconciliations. My spiritual director and a consecrated virgin mentored me. I read and prayed much about consecrated virginity: its benefits and responsibilities. My longing grew more and more. The day of my consecration was perfect! I hated to have it end! I prayed for everyone and everything I could think of, and I meant every word of my promises and savored the words of consecration. I have entrusted myself yet more to Our Lady to keep me faithful. My desire is to be a clear channel of grace for others and to love God with all my heart.

Marion Strishock, March 1, 2009

I was consecrated on March 1, 2009 in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was an especially appropriate place to be consecrated because our Blessed Mother has shared with me her spirituality and interceded for me throughout my journey. It was as I sat before the Blessed Sacrament in deep adoration that Jesus called me to be His bride. My consecration day surpassed all my hopes and dreams and continues to be the happiest day of my life. I cannot express the immense gratitude I feel each day to have been given the gift of my vocation.

Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl could not have known that the date he chose to consecrate me was the beginning of Vocations Awareness Week at Mary of Nazareth Roman Catholic School where I teach. Once again God's providence was at work. It was a week of special graces as I experienced this vocation through the eyes of children. I was interviewed on closed circuit television and the students wondered if I had been a normal child like them, or had I prayed all the time. I teach 164 middle school students, and they sat in rapt attention as I shared my discernment story. The humorous and joyful parts of the story were easy to share, but God was also calling me to share the hardships, disappointments, and low points on the journey. My students saw me as I am both the good qualities and all my flaws. It was an act of love and obedience, and God gave me the grace to accomplish it. My students realized that God really does speak to you, that prayer can move mountains, the sacraments carry you through the hard times, and God is walking right beside you. My story made the lessons I teach in Religion class become real.

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel was not large enough for my students to attend, so the school celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving. I wore my white dress again, which helped the younger students understand the concept of being a Bride of Christ. "Wow! She really did marry Jesus!" The first grade had to touch the dress, as if to be certain it was real. A third grade boy asked, "Do we call you Mrs. Christ, or are you still Miss Strishock?" Another student asked, "Why didn't Jesus give you a diamond ring?"

They understood that although I looked the same, I was now conse-

crated to God. They remind me every day that I am an icon of Christ and must practice what I teach. They have very high expectations of me, and I rely on the grace of God to guide my actions each day. I am keenly aware when I fall short.

The slower and quieter pace of summer allowed me to experience my spouse in a deeper relationship. I found I thought of Jesus always. As I did my household chores and yard work, we talked constantly. His presence and love were so intense. My spiritual director explained that Christ was taking His bride to a deeper level of intimacy. When I can't experience that deep intimacy, there is an aching and longing in my heart. I have come to understand that it is not the absence of Christ, but experiencing His presence in a new way.

The Year of the Priest called me to not just pray for my Archbishop and the priests, but to offer myself on their behalf. Each day of the week in addition to my usual prayers I fast, abstain, or sacrifice material comforts for their intentions and spiritual needs. It has united me to Christ, as He offered Himself for me. I allow Him to use my sacrifices to fulfill His will.

As my first anniversary draws near, I look forward to a retreat, and I wait to see where He leads me in continuing to live out my vocation as a Consecrated Virgin.

Michele DiVito, June 13, 2009

"Speak now to God and say with your whole heart, I seek your face; your face Lord I desire." (St. Anselm from the office of readings, Friday, the first week of Advent).

To seek the Lord with your heart...that is where I began this journey and where I constantly return. I was reminded of this by the words of St. Anselm and I pray his words everyday; hopefully with my whole heart.

His words took me back to a retreat in 2006. I had decided to go on a private retreat to attempt to discern the will of God in my life. Where was God leading me? At that time I had no idea! My life was good. I was happy, but felt as if something was missing; as if I was anticipating something. So I embarked on this retreat, and thanks be to God, was given a passage from Jeremiah by my spiritual director:

"...When you seek me with all your heart you will find me with you, says the Lord, and I will change your lot." (Jeremiah 29).

And so it was, and is. We seek the Lord with our heart. It is with our heart that we love, so what other way is there to find God for "God is love." The change has been gradual and is still occurring. The catalyst for this change was a dawning realization that I am God's beloved!! I, as yet, do not fully understand this, but I truly know this. To know the love of God, personally, is in part the meaning of our vocation as consecrated virgins.

And with this knowledge comes a change. Not an external change, but an internal, spiritual change. I am certain of God's love! Do I struggle with worries and fears of the twenty first century? Do I often doubt myself and feel loneliness and separation? Yes! But I continue to be taught to turn to my Beloved, my Lord, my Spouse; to seek Him and depend on Him for everything. I often fail in my dependence. My ego urges me to self-reliance. But God is good, and through prayer and the gift of people in my life I learn and slowly, in small steps, grow closer to God.

Reflections continued

The gift of our virginity, the gift of our consecration is to know the sure love and mercy of God, and despite faults and failures to continue to seek, with our whole heart, the love of our spouse Christ Jesus. I began my journey to my consecration with this search of my heart and everyday endeavor to continue it: To find God and hold onto Him, and when I let go to begin the search again, and again, and again.

Catherine Wright, April 29, 2009

The most powerful moment for me during my consecration was receiving my ring from Archbishop Niederauer. I took the ring, my hand trembling, and slipped it on my finger. But, just as the jeweler warned might happen, my emotional state had caused my finger to swell. Even as the Archbishop was offering me my copy of the Liturgy of the Hours, exhorting me to “pray always”, I was still struggling to get the ring past my knuckle.

This physical struggle mirrored an inner one that I had battled since I had first begun to pursue becoming a consecrated virgin. How could I, an ordinary woman, even think of wearing a ring that would mark me as Christ’s bride? I could never be good enough, holy enough, to take on such an immense responsibility.

In thinking this way, however, I had everything backwards. Yes, to wear the ring would be an immense responsibility. Only love could make such a thing possible. Not my love for Christ, but His love for me. Christ was offering His ring to me because He knew I needed it as an anchor. He knew I needed it as a concrete sign of His love—to give me the strength to grow in love towards others and to face the difficulties of life.

In the days directly following the Rite of Consecration, the mere sight of the ring on my finger was so wondrous, it could bring tears to my eyes. I had no idea then that my mother’s cancer would take her life in less than six months. My tears these days are of a very different sort, and the joy I felt at my consecration seems very distant now. But when I catch a glimpse of my ring, I hear a quiet whisper, “I am with you always until the end of time.” And I remember once again, Christ is with me—my rock, my love, my fortress... my joy.

Trish Sanford, April 28, 2009

As the consecration ceremony began and I walked down a very long aisle surrounded by hundreds of friends and family, I had no idea what to expect, from the ceremony, from myself and especially from God. While still singing the opening hymn, I began to feel the love of God physically come upon me. I could actually feel the weight of it resting on my shoulders. At the same time I was frightened by the thought that I was not good enough for that kind of love. God’s reassuring word to me was, “Sometimes accepting my love for you is the cross I am asking you to bear.”

So I accepted the consecration and the love of God that I know I am not good enough to deserve, but that has been given to me. As I continue to figure out how I should live differently because of this new state in life, I also am coming to terms with the cost of this vocation.

God sending Jesus to be a man for us and to die for us taught us, that in this life, there can be no true love without sacrifice. When I feel the

love and protection of Christ, I reflect on the sacrifice He made for me. When I feel the ache inside me when I look at a small child with its mother or see the loving touch between a husband and wife, I offer up that as my sacrifice for Christ.

In marriage, in family, in Christian community, in all states of life within the Church, true love cannot exist without sacrifice. This is the way God has chosen for Him and me to be in true love.

Judy Berhow, March 25, 2009

I was consecrated on the Feast of the Annunciation in 2009. It is a beautiful thing to be the spouse of Jesus Christ! I have still hardly begun to comprehend His great love for me...His spousal love...His desire to draw me into Himself and to make me one with Him. Through the particular events surrounding my consecration He has made it clear that He truly has chosen me for this vocation and He desires to have me as His bride. It is consoling to know that His will is being done and that I have not just chosen my own will. He has poured out His graces upon me since the day of my consecration. Some I have noticed, some others have mentioned to me.

He also uses me to draw others to Himself without me even being aware of it. I think this is so beautiful as I know that it is His work and I cannot take credit for it. If it is good others see in me, it is really a reflection of Him that has inspired them.

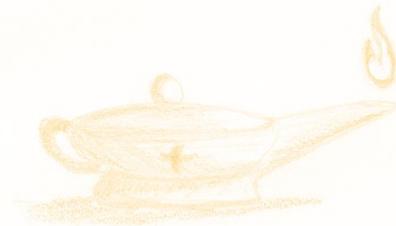
He is gentle, but at the same time, He demands sacrifice and union with His will in all things. Everything that He does and everything that happens to me is because it is absolutely the best thing for me. He does not waste anything and He does not give mediocre gifts. It is all the very best for me.

He promises to provide for His bride. I have seen Him do this in large and small ways, neither less beautiful nor less significant. It has been quite incredible. Through His actions, He builds my trust in Him and I continue to be thrilled with His little surprises.

He is very gracious in answering my prayers. I am amazed that people have so much confidence in my prayers and they continue to request prayers of such a poor, weak creature. But they know He loves His spouse and that it is Him that answers out of His great love.

I am confident in His great love and look so forward to the growth of His love within me. If I cooperate with His grace, He will mold me into a perfect image of Himself and He is all love.

As I am a poor, weak creature, I beg your prayers that His will may be done in me.

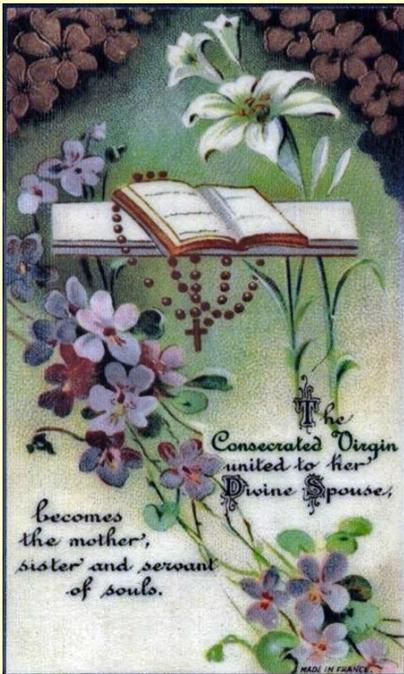


My Life as a Consecrated Virgin By Diane Christine Farr

In the homily of the rite for the consecration of virgins we read, “Keep the glory of your virginity uncorrupted by pride. Nourish your love of God by feeding on the body of Christ; strengthen it by self-denial; build it up by study of the scriptures, by untiring prayer, by works of mercy. Let your thoughts be on the things of God. Let your life be hidden Christ in God.”

St Bernard has written about the connection between virginity and humility especially seen in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The humble heart recognizes the sacredness and beauty of virginity when out of love it is preserved for God alone. Virginity is something that encompasses our whole being through our espousal to Christ. It is our desire and our joy as virgins to be transformed through our consecration and led into a profound union with Jesus the Bridegroom of the entire Church. We contemplate the nobility of our calling with great humility and reverence.

As it was with the Blessed Virgin who also lived in the world there is an element of the hidden life in our vocation. Our thoughts are on the things of God as we carry out the most ordinary tasks. I see this to be true in my own life.



I live out my vocation in the midst of my family as was the case with many women in the early church. I am able to do some reading with the aid of a powerful magnifying glass despite the fact that I am legally blind. I have also learned to draw flowers, birds and butterflies with colored ink pens. I spend much of my time taking care of my mother who is chronically ill with muscular dystrophy. Praying the Liturgy of the Hours has been made easier lately by using MP3 disks that are now available from the Xavier Society for the Blind. I still use the large print edition for segments not included on the disks.

At the time of my confirmation I was beginning to perceive God’s call. At the age of fifteen I made an interior vow of perpetual virginity, understanding that Jesus was calling me to Himself. At first I thought I might be called to a cloistered community, but then I realized that God was calling me to remain in the world. I taught novices in the Dominican laity for many years – I am not involved with this now, because I am no longer “lay,” but living a distinct form of Consecrated Life, with its own rich bridal spirituality.

When I first read the rite of the consecration of virgins I noticed that it was identical to the spirituality I had embraced. After many years of persistent letter writing and meetings with the chancellor and the bishop I was consecrated by Bishop Clark on February 20th 2005. My father reproduced a lovely old profession card that had belonged to my great aunt and cleverly changed the word “religious” to “consecrated” virgin. We also picked out my consecration ring at the same jeweler that my parents bought their wedding rings almost fifty years before. Consecrated Virgin Helen Groudin made my wedding veil as well as the chapel veil I wear at Mass.

I had a harpist at my reception. I played my own music on guitar for years, but now I had the desire to learn the harp. I obtained my own harp four months after my consecration. My father had carefully researched what type and how it might be purchased. I play by ear since I am unable to read music. I have since written several songs on the harp dealing with my vocation.

I have always been an avid gardener, and over the years I have learned a great deal about the cottage garden flowers and English and American wild flowers. I am involved with the Mary Garden movement helping people learn more about the Christian symbolism of flowers and those dedicated to Our Lady. It can be found on the Mary Garden site at www.mgardens.org under “A Mary Garden of Virginal Consecration.”

My dear friend and sister in Christ, Consecrated Virgin Theresa Drajin, who lives in Chicago, often reads to me over the phone. We enjoy going through and discussing spiritual books together. Recently after my beloved cat, Missy, passed away she surprised me with a gift certificate good for one cat adopted from our local SPCA. Now we have Lily, a beautiful and playful white and gray cat.

My life is very difficult due to my delicate health and all the responsibilities I have. I am sure many of you can identify with this, and so I propose these words for our reflection, They are taken from the back of my consecration commemorative card and are from the Divine Office. They read, “Keep watch with love wise virgins, with your lamps alight. See the Bridegroom comes, go out to welcome him. Sing for joy virgins of Christ. He is your Spouse for all eternity. The king has desired your beauty which he himself has given you. Your God and king has become your spouse. He has redeemed you and made you holy. Now you are wedded to your king and your God.

Announcements . . Announcements

Our Lady's Festival – A Symposium on the Virgin Saints, First of the Series: March 13, 2010 9:30am to 3:00pm, Sponsored by: the Diocese of LaCrosse Office of Consecrated Life, being held in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

All are invited for this day of reflection and prayer with other consecrated virgins, focused on the mystery and beginning of our vocation at the Annunciation. For more information, please contact Barb Swieczak 608-788-7700 ext 2240 or bswieciak@dioceseoflacrosse.com

Institute on Religious Life 2010 National Meeting

April 9-11, 2010 *For the Greater Glory of God – The Theological, Spiritual & Apostolic Legacy of Rev. John A. Hardon, S.J., Servant of God.* Consecrated virgins are invited to attend this conference, at which Archbishop Raymond L. Burke will deliver the keynote address and receive the 2010 *Pro Fidelitate et Virtute* award. Registration forms for the IRL conference are available on the website of the IRL, www.religiouslife.com.

Our sisters in consecration in the United Kingdom have asked that we announce a **UK retreat at Belmont Abbey May 3 – 6, 2010**. The retreat is open to those who are consecrated and those who are seriously discerning the vocation. Please contact Ruth Durham, rcd.ocv@virgin.net for more information.

Regarding translated texts from Rome 2008: A good number of consecrated virgins received my plea for assistance in reviewing English and Spanish translations of talks and homilies from our Rome 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins. To all of you, I offer a heartfelt word of gratitude, on behalf of all of our English and Spanish-speaking sisters, for the generous gifts of your time and patience over these last few weeks. I hope we can soon announce publication of these translations by the Vatican. German translations are also under control, **but we are still in need of consecrated virgins to translate into Italian and French, from English, Italian, Spanish, and French. If you can help, or know of someone who can, please let me know!** – Judith Stegman, president@consecratedvirgins.org

Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

People are waking up to the call to protect and defend all life, from conception to natural death. The March for Life in Washington D.C. on January 22 brought out more young people than ever. There was a Mass for Life at the national Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception the evening before, celebrated by 5 Cardinals, 40 Bishops and Archbishops. More than 350 Priests were in attendance, as well as 65 Deacons, 550 seminarians and thousands of lay people, and religious. More and more young people across the country are standing up and speaking out for life.

Here is a quote from Cardinal O'Connor: "The gift of life, God's special gift, is no less beautiful when it is accompanied by illness or weakness, hunger or poverty, mental or physical handicaps, loneliness or old age. Indeed, at these times, human life gains extra splendor as it requires our special care, concern and reverence. It is in and through the weakest of human vessels that the Lord continues to reveal the power of His love."

Since this is "Life Corner," I want to express deep gratitude for the lives of our brothers and sisters in Haiti and for the outpouring of love and support that has been given to them. Many journalists and aid workers in Haiti have expressed their admiration for the courage and patience, resilience, faith and dignity of the victims of the terrible earthquake

When asked what is God's response to this terrible catastrophe, we were told that God's response is in our response... victims and those who are helping. We are all united in one great response of love that binds us all in Christ's love.



**United States Association
of Consecrated Virgins**

300 West Ottawa Street
Lansing, Michigan 48933-1577
USA

Fax: 253-270-5507

E-mail:
info@consecratedvirgins.org
President@consecratedvirgins.org

- www.consecratedvirgins.org

Consecrations

United States:

✦ January 21, 2010, **Margaret Flipp**, Archdiocese of San Francisco, through the hands of The Most Reverend George Niederauer

Other Countries:

Italy:

✦ March 8, 2009, **Manila Martelli**, in Cesenatico

✦ December 7, 2009, **Silvia Marchiori**, **Nella Pavanetto**, and **Kalya Vanin**, in Venice, through the hands of Cardinal Angelo Scola

France:

✦ October 2, 2009, **Anne-Cecile Makula**, in Lyon

✦ January 24, 2010, **Evelyne Gordien**, Archdiocese of Paris

Spain:

✦ July 17, 2009, **Carina Lira** and **Laura Sampallo**, Diocese of San Tomas, Corrientes

from the President's journal . . .

Greetings and blessings on this Feast of the Presentation of our Lord! Along with our sisters and brothers living other forms of Consecrated Life, we celebrate this day our common call to accept the grace to leave behind ordinary lives and to enter into a closer relationship of intimacy with Jesus. (*cf VC 16 § 1*) In the very diversity of the forms of Consecrated Life, holy Mother Church shows her love for those who have received the gift to follow Christ's own words that some would live single for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven (*Mt. 19*).

Related to this, let me report that work with The Vocation Tree is progressing nicely, and we anticipate soon the launching of a full set of lesson plans, in English and Spanish, coordinated with an interactive website version of the Vocation Tree. Besides this, my recent life has been absorbed by work with the English and Spanish translations of the conferences and homilies from the Rome 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins. This work has brought me in closer touch with many of my sisters in consecration, and allowed us to work together on a project to serve the Order of Virgins worldwide. I hope to make progress soon with the Italian and French translations.

Order of Virgins – There seems to be a convergence of thought manifested in Bishop Boyea's cover article, Magalis' and my investigation in *Something Ancient, Something New* and Diane Farr's personal reflection. All three articles disclose the discovery of a deeper meaning to our being virgins within the Order of Virgins. Two related questions flowing from this discovery have been sources of conversation among members of the Council as well as members of the Formation Resource Development Team. I encourage the conversation among all of our members. We are asking how we can deepen the natural sisterly bonds that exist among us, given the reality of living with the limitations of geography; and how we can help one another to discover and live more deeply our virginal love for Jesus Christ, in the spirituality of the Church herself. --

In the joy of our Beloved Spouse,
Judith Stegman