

The Lamp



United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

December 12, 2009
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Volume 14, Issue 5

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

December 12, 2009 – Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Real virginity is a Christian thing! Bishop Demetrio Fernandez Gonzalez of Tarazona, Spain gave a talk in Rome in May 2008 on this very topic. There is now an English translation and what struck me the most was his contention that virginity, as a real gift, was not treasured in pagan cultures nor in the Old Testament. Its true value is seen only in Christ.

One segment of his talk regarded the Trinitarian basis of virginity, something that had never occurred to me before. He starts with this premise: “God in His Divine essence does not need anyone else for the divine procession.” From this he notes that the Father begets the Son eternally without any other agent and he sends forth the Holy Spirit. It is basically out of the fullness of life and love in the Father that the Son is begotten, who himself is the fullness of life and love.

Bp. Fernandez then notes that some might ask, “How can you say that God has a son, if He does not have a wife?” But that is precisely the point. God needs no other source but His own fullness of life and love to beget the same fullness of life and love in the Son. Then he concludes: “The eternal Father engenders His Son virginally. God is virginal in His essence, but also the eternal Father is virginal in the generation of the Son. And this is something we would not know in the history of mankind until Jesus Christ revealed it to us.”

Thus virginity in the Father is a radical aloneness and a radical fullness of life and love that begets another from all eternity. Before Jesus we did not know anything about the Trinity and this internal dynamic. Hence there could be no foundation for real virginity before Christ and there is not without Christ, who reveals to us who the Father really is.

A little later in his talk, the Bishop draws a parallel between this eternal action of the Father and the virginity of Mary. Mary virginally begot the Word of God made man. This same Son of God is begotten eternally from the Father in a virginal way and was begotten of the Virgin Mary in a virginal way. “The parallelism is priceless because Mary is an icon of the Father.”

And you, my sisters who have had your virginity consecrated by the Church, are not only icons of Jesus the virgin, but also of Mary as virgin, and finally of the Father as virginally begetting his Son. What a powerful mystery!

This implies a real obligation, however. An icon is not just a photograph but is rather a window into another reality. Your own virginity must be the window for others to see something of the Father, something of Mary, and something of Jesus. In each case, it seems to me, what is to be manifest is that fullness of life and love. *continued on page 8*

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Part 1

The Church is the sacrament of salvation established by Jesus Christ, and, as such, all of the elements of the Church derive from the saving work of Christ revealed in the New Testament. The manifestation of the Triune God through all of salvation history leads us to the Church – the Church, through which salvation is open *to all* who can receive and accept the message.

In this context, let us reflect upon the vocation of virginity within the Church. Through their consecration, virgins are mystically espoused to Jesus Christ, Bridegroom of the Church. Our link to the New Testament revelation of the saving work of Christ comes from our link to Our Blessed Mother, Queen of Virgins. Her virginity is essential to the understanding of Church as a sacrament of salvation, and from this link we can understand our own consecration as a sacramental. The Blessed Virgin Mary gave a total donation of herself in holy obedience to the will of God.

From the Blessed Virgin Mary, as an icon of the Church, we can discover the essence of our own virginal consecration: a total donation of our entire being in holy obedience to the will of God. This donation includes a donation of our physical virginity (that gift or grace we have first received from our heavenly Father, have accepted as a gift, and now offer back to Him). It has been an act of our free will to accept this gift of physical virginity and to preserve it throughout our lives, before and after consecration.

The consecrated virgin has an immortal soul with the capacity to make free decisions. In the psycho theological meaning of our being, we have the capacity from grace and from our immortal soul to keep the integrity of our virginal consecration. Through their consecration, virgins become icons of the Church herself, of the Blessed Virgin, she who is the new Eve, and even, as Bishop Boyea's article notes, icons of the Father. We become on earth a sign of the heavenly kingdom to come. "See, I make all things new" (Cfr. Isaiah 43,19)

Part 2

The Church in the mystery of salvation gives a generous expression of "make all things new" in the vocation of holy orders; the ordained receive the grace to be faithful and obedient, and to fulfill the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ. Some priests are ordained to minister as collaborators with the diocesan Bishop of the local Church; others are ordained to ministry within a religious family. Saint Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus, which, from the beginning had a special vow concerning missions, to go anywhere in the world when sent by the pope on pastoral assignment.

In this year of the priest, we want to pay special tribute to the priesthood in this article by honoring a priest who is part of us in the communion of saints, Father Robert Carl Stegman, S.J. (Judith's uncle), who went to India as a Jesuit missionary in 1941, and didn't return for his first visit home until 25 years had passed. This description is from a 1947 article in "The Patna Mission Letter", written just before his ordination day in India:

"Father Stegman was born September 19, 1915, at Cold Springs in the blue grass hills of old Kentucky. When he was of school age, his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Carl E. Stegman, moved a few miles North to Ft. Thomas, where his family still lives. The Sisters of Divine Providence at St. Thomas Parish there gave him his early schooling. He attended St. Xavier's High in Cincinnati, Ohio, graduating in 1933. The interests of her growing family keep his mother from making the trip for his Big Day. But she will share in his joy from afar, together with his four sisters and seven brothers, all younger than himself and all very much alive. Father Stegman's father died last year (April 26th, 1946) and will witness the event more closely from his place in heaven. There will be a Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving on the Sunday following the Ordination at Father Stegman's home parish Church, St. Thomas, in Ft. Thomas Ky."

These words touched our hearts, thinking that his priesthood, as alter Christus, was fulfilled in much the same way as Jesus' own priesthood was fulfilled, at least in relationship to their mothers. Fr. Stegman's mother was physically separated from him at the time of his ordination, because he, like the Son before him, was doing "something new." Father Stegman, S.J. did do something new in his mission to a foreign land. And his mother, like the Mother before her, "was there for her son," albeit from a distance. In a Mother's Day greeting a few years earlier, an even younger Father Stegman had written to his mother, "Christ had a mother. He allowed her to share His sufferings, because she was His mother, but when He tried to express His love for her, He made her "Queen of Heaven". When Christ calls someone for His service, He takes that one's place in his family. I can't do much to express my gratitude, mother, but since Jesus took my place there, He has made you His mother in a sense, so I'm going to expect Him to treat you in some measure like He treated His Mother. Your loving son, Bob, S.J."

Salvation History. The Church. A complete donation of self by virgin, mother, priest. Let us rejoice in the greatness of our God.

Council News

Current Council Members and Officers are:

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

Magalis Aguilera, 2010 – 2012 (appointed **Vice-President** thru 2009); Archdiocese of Miami

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

Twanna Bolling, Member-at-large, 2008-2010 ; (appointed **Secretary** thru 2009) Archdiocese of Chicago.

Shalina Stilley, Member-at-Large, 2009-2011, Diocese of Phoenix.

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 4-8, 2010
The Cenacle, Chicago
(See enclosed brochure)

Readers may enjoy visiting the website:

<http://sponsa-christi.blogspot.com/>

the blog of a newly consecrated virgin – see particularly the posting of Tuesday, November 17, 2009: “St. Ambrose, Recalling His Sister’s Consecration.”

Team Announcements:

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 Corinthians 7:31)

Formation Resource Development

Team: Work continues toward the preparation of a handbook on the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world.

Membership Team: **Shalina Stilley** leads this team, and she asks if there is anyone who might be willing to help her work on putting together a “Welcome Packet” for new USACV members, and perhaps helping with other projects that arise from time to time for this important work. Also, members will find with this mailing of the newsletter copies of current membership lists, for personal use.

Website Team: Work seems to be progressing slowly on the renovation of our website, but things are progressing. Please let **Judith Stegman** know if you are interested in working on this team. Any degree of website development knowledge, from none to extensive, qualifies you to assist, if you have ideas and love sharing our vocation!

Candidate Care Team: Green Bay, Wisconsin is the place where the candidate care folder has most recently traveled, after a visit to Northern Ohio. You are invited to share your consecration day invitations, programs, photos, or to request that this travelling portfolio stop in your city. Contact **Barb Swieciak** at scwjoy@gmail.com or 1-608-788-7700.

Prayer Network Team: **Aliceanne Sawyer** writes, on Thanksgiving Day: Today as we give thanks I am called to thank each of our USACV prayer network members for their prayers and support for our sisters in consecration. Often we hear how the prayers are answered favorably, and at these times I can repeat, “My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.” Our work is so needed. When He does not quite agree with our request quite the way we would want, we accept, and pray that those who have sent the request will be “mindful that He protects Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy,

the mercy promised to our fathers, to Abraham and his sons [and daughters] for ever”.

At this time we have 68 members in our Email prayer network, praising and petitioning our Divine Spouse. May our work for the USACV continue to be a vibrant and nourishing tree for all to be fed and comforted.

More Announcements

Our Lady's Festival

March 13th 2010

9am-3pm

The first of a Series of Symposiums on the Virgin Saints is being sponsored by the Diocese of La Crosse Office of Consecrated Life, but is being held in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to allow those in Illinois and other surrounding states to join us. Auxiliary Bishop Callahan (Milwaukee) and Monsignor Charles will give presentations at this initial symposium. The series is being planned as an opportunity to learn from one another and to deepen in our spirituality as consecrated virgins.

A detailed invitation has been mailed out to consecrated virgins in Midwestern States. If anyone is interested in more information or has questions, please contact Barb at scwjoy@gmail.com or 1-608-788-7700 ext. 2240.

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. We are in the process of arranging a time for consecrated virgins to visit with Archbishop Burke, the former Episcopal Moderator of the USACV, on Saturday, April 10, 2010. Registration forms for the conference will soon be available on the website of the IRL, www.religiouslife.com. *If you plan to attend, please also let Judith Stegman know, as she prepares arrangements for our visit with the Archbishop on April 10.*

Special Report from England

Special report from **Ruth Durham**, consecrated virgin, on the February 2, 2009 retreat of consecrated virgins in England

A new beginning dawned on the 2nd February 2009 for some consecrated virgins, who desired to follow the way of Ordo Consecrationis Virginum more radically. The longing to meet and engage spiritually had been growing in our hearts for some time but it took the auspicious international Congress- pilgrimage in Rome in May 2008 to set us in motion. Our hearts and minds had been sealed in the love of our Beloved and our vocation anchored ever more deeply in Christ. To retreat, to reflect together on where we, as consecrated virgins had come from, where we are, where we are to go, [in the light of the talks and homilies in Rome], began to be the focus of our thoughts and propelled us into action.

Our retreat began fittingly on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord and the world day of Consecrated Life. It was also unforgettable by the deep fall of snow, shrouding us in white. We met at Belmont Abbey, a spiritual home to one of the gathered consecrated virgins, where the Benedictine monks welcomed us most hospitably and warmly. We were a small group of both consecrated virgins and those seriously discerning the call to a life of perpetual virginity for Christ.

The daily rhythm of our days together centred on the Liturgy of the Hours with the monks, Holy Mass, Lectio Divina, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and meditations on the themes- Following Christ, Praying in Christ, Living in Christ. We were privileged to have private use of a few lectures and homilies from the OCV Rome Congress -pilgrimage, which we used to help explore our vocation more deeply. In fact, we began the first evening with thoughts on the address given by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. That night, we ended by praying the Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament, honouring the Queen of Virgins.

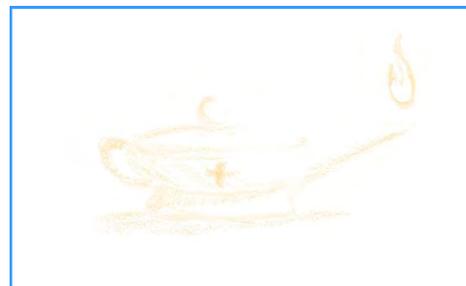
Over the next three days, we so treasured our time. Three of the monks, including the Abbot, assisted us with daily talks on our theme. One of the monks enlightened us brilliantly on St

Augustine's praying the Psalms. He also gave us a most powerful presentation on the life of St Paul [in keeping with the year of St Paul]. The Abbot gleaned gems from Pope Benedict's homily to consecrated virgins at Congress, also endorsing the use of the term virgin, being as it is valued by the Church and counter cultural in our society today. He called for purity of body, soul, spirit, putting on Christ. The third monk, a former Abbot spoke on women in the Gospels. He pleaded for Jesus, who needed to be listened to, loved and respected in the Blessed Sacrament. We ourselves led sessions on the Prayer of the Church and shared the events of the Rome Congress – from both a personal and objective standpoint.

At the start of the retreat, we had agreed to eat our main meals in silence but welcomed time to engage in conversation during minor refreshments. During those times, there was no small talk – we were focused on our vocation, sharing our experiences and views. By the end of the retreat, we voiced our clear hope to organise future retreats. The formation of a UK website for OCV was highlighted as a definite need, further reinforced by the Abbot during his talk.

Our retreat closed on the feast of St Agatha, an appropriate day for the gathered consecrated virgins to renew the propositum during Holy Mass. So ended the first Chapter of a new and small beginning. Our "lamps" refilled and the flame of spousal Love burning within us to follow the Lamb of God. We hope to meet again next year, to go deeper in the mystery of Christ our Bridegroom and into our vocation in the Church as bride of Christ, to fully respond to the needs of our Church in our time.

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam.





Consecrated virgins at the 2009 Fatima, international retreat-pilgrimage, at St Stephen's chapel at the end of the Way of the Cross! A report on the retreat-pilgrimage will soon be available on our website.



Marilyn Wagner and Bishop Leonard Blair at the reception following Marilyn's consecration.

*Photos from Our Sisters
around the World*



Nina Rivas, Venezuela



*Kate Coutinho,
India, during the
Rite of
Consecration*



Barb Swieczak and Bishop ListECKI at Barb's 25th anniversary Mass

Reflections from the newly consecrated

In this issue and the next, we'll feature stories from virgins consecrated in the last year or two. Today we hear from Sara Navarro and Therese Ivers, young virgins consecrated this past summer:

Sara Navarro, consecrated July 20, 2009, Archdiocese of Chicago:

I am deeply thankful to Jesus, my beloved Spouse, for calling me to be totally His and for giving me the gift of being a consecrated virgin in the world on July 20th, 2009 at the hands of Francis Cardinal George. I truly believe that when Jesus desires somebody, he puts his gaze on that person and never takes it away. Jesus is faithful! This is something he has proven to me since the day he called me in my heart and he also has kept me and protected me, in order to be totally His.

Every call comes with challenges. This is one of the more beautiful characteristics of my consecration, and probably of all consecrations. God proves us in love, so the desire, perseverance and faith, may grow. In a personal call, one enters into a holy ground, a ground of faith, and a ground of hope. This has been my experience for many years walking in this journey. As I was seeking the consecration, things seemed frequently to be delayed. First, one week, and then two, and then one year and then two years passed, without knowing how my process was moving. It seemed that there was not going to be any consecration. There were also many requisites that made the path more difficult. - I needed to have a stable house, a full time job, medical insurance, etc. All these requisites were beyond my limits and for sure totally out of my control.

Not too long ago I listened to something that I totally agreed with in my heart: Our God is the God of the impossible! Yes, it is true, He does what nobody can do and in total obscurity He comes to give us His light and show us the path. This conviction is what helped me to keep going and persevere! I learned to wait. It also made me trust and not give up on His promises and His call. I knew that it was His call and not mine and that He was not going to disappoint me. He has never abandoned me. Jesus has taught me to trust totally in Him, even when it is not so easy, and He delays in his coming.

Not only was I waiting for the green light from the Cardinal, I also needed a new place to live and health insurance to prove to the Archdiocese that I was stable. Jesus came with real and concrete deeds of love. I was led one day in this obscurity to visit a priest for spiritual direction and after talking with him, and without knowing him for long, he offered me an available space on the church's property for me to live. We both agreed that it was a movement of the Holy Spirit leading us and giving us light. After this, one of my co-workers at my job reduced their hours, and this meant I could have a full time position. With full time hours, I now qualified for medical insurance. He was taking care of all the things needed for the bride to be ready for Him.

In June 2008, I went to Mexico City, to visit the Basilica of Guadalupe. I wanted to put my vocation in the hands of Mary. The next year one day before the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, I sent a little note through the email, to be put at her feet at the Grotto. The next day after doing this, I received an answer. The secretary of the vicar sent me a date for my consecration; the date for my consecration was going to be on July 20th, 2009. How great is the intercession of our

Mother. My vocation is also in her hands; I know that if I am totally hers, I will belong totally to Jesus and I won't get lost. She is the faithful Virgin, the prudent Virgin, the Queen of all Virgins, and helps us to maintain our lamps full of oil today and every day of our lives.

Therese M, Ivers, consecrated August 15, 2009, Diocese of Sioux Falls:

It has been only a few months since I have had the great grace of receiving the consecration as a bride of Christ in the presence of other consecrated virgins. It is true that deep changes are made upon the consecration, and I feel that a seal upon my heart has been set. What are these changes? Now, I am bound in a special way to pray for my people, I have a unique relationship with my bishop, and a host of other relationships have been created. Yet, they all flow from the spousal bond established between my Creator and myself, and it is truly a mysterious bond. What can I say other than that espousals to the Son of God are necessarily ineffable, and upon my consecration, my heart sang.

Living out consecrated virginity is a joy and a blessed challenge. In applying the words of the Consecration to my life, I think of the words of St. Paul when he said "Live in the Spirit...if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law." For me, this means careful and prayerful pondering on a daily basis on what my Spouse desires. My ring reminds me that I am bound to His service with a bond of love, not of servility, without undue rigidity in carrying out His will. I do find that this means that loving communication is important in gently discerning not just my day to day activities, but long term projects and goals. It is such a comfort to have a Spouse who respects my personhood and allows me to reciprocate His self-gift in my unique and individual way given who I am and my own talents, weaknesses, and in my circumstances.

To have Christ to turn to in times of perplexity, joy, sorrow, and in fact, to have Him be all to me, and to be present with me constantly is such a blessing, often un-sensed and unperceived but yet so real in this vale of tears. In this relationship, in which I have just entered, love and responsibility come hand in hand. The freedom I have as a consecrated virgin to seek one thing only, comes with the responsibility of growing in the virtues, especially that of prudence in how to live my vocation of love fully. I am so grateful to have the example of our virgin saints, and particularly of the Blessed Virgin, in how to live out life in the world as one attentive to the Divine Spouse. I am also grateful for the loving example and support given by other consecrated virgins.

From **Barb Swieczak**:

A special thanks for all the prayers and support on the occasion of my Silver Jubilee.

Your cards and notes of support touched me deeply.

It was a time of great grace.

May Our Beloved Jesus grant each of you the graces you need to grow in His Love.

Humanity: Our Loving Big Family

Those who participated in the Rome 2008 international gathering of consecrated virgins will recall young Anan Lewis, from Baghdad. Anan recently spent a few months studying in the United States. She writes these words to us...

Ever since our Spouse, Jesus Christ, called me to be His bride, I have been trying to follow Him however and wherever He wants me to. Being a consecrated woman has deeply changed my life and enriched my spiritual and human perspective as Christian, woman and a university instructor. I have always believed that my profession is an integral part of my vocation as a consecrated virgin. Enhancing my knowledge, deepening my readings and getting academic degrees were never meant to be merely a means of having good income and social prestige. It is an endeavor to give more to those who need knowledge, seek for the depth of life and aspire for a better self. Coming to the States as a research scholar in support of my PhD dissertation on African American Women Poets was part of my quest of pursuing my vocation and expanding my knowledge. Never once I doubted God's plan for me as a teacher, specially being a University teacher in Iraq where our youth are suffering of frustration, lack of interest and spiritual void after the bloody recent war we encountered. It placed us all with the task of not only rebuilding damaged cities or neighborhoods, but also damaged spirits and hopeless hearts! For me, it has become my task to share Jesus, the doctor of souls, in this healing process!

However, it is worth saying that the feeling of compassion and communion I felt here in the States is truly impressive and has become of a redemptive quality to my own wounds as an Iraqi person. In the midst of a world like ours, of political conflicts, materialistic greed, violence, false slogans and lack of love, there comes a ray of hope in people whose loving hearts are too deep and pure to be polluted! Living in Mississippi for three months with the Raymonds, a simple but loving family of a husband and wife, I, a stranger to them, was joyfully welcomed in their own home where I found people who are really willing to embrace me as a daughter and show concern, kindness and parental tenderness. That is why departing them was such a bitter thing! God's love united us... that love which gives freely regardless of one's color, religion, culture or nationality. Indeed I realized more and more that before real love and compassion all boundaries dissolve.

That is exactly how I felt too in our Rome meeting in May 2008. There I saw my consecrated sisters, who I have never met before, from all parts of the world, tremendously showing care and consideration for Iraq and Iraqi people. Telling me about the too many masses that were held and the numerous prayers that were raised for us, for the safety and peace for my country, have deeply touched my heart and soul. Thus I experienced the meaning of having brothers and sisters in God's love, the meaning of having a home wherever I go in this world and the meaning of having a big family of humanity.

Glory be to God, the Holy Spirit and to Jesus Christ, our Spouse, whose blessed Mother, will always be our support and the fountain of motherly care...Amen

from the President's journal

Thanks to all members who took the time to vote in our recent election. 80 members participated – a good number. I do look forward to serving you again as president over the next three years. Please let me know your thoughts, concerns, hopes, and desires for our association as together we support one another in living out this vocation of love for Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church.

I would like to take a special moment to also thank you for re-electing Magalis Aguilera to our leadership council. I think that sometimes her contributions are hidden, especially because her native tongue isn't English. Magalis offers all of herself, enthusiastically and humbly, to the service of the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins, an offering that includes her time, talent, and treasure. For me, she is also a dear friend, who continues to teach me to relate to Jesus as my Divine Spouse in every circumstance of daily living. It is this contribution of her faith that I expect will endure among us, even longer than the contribution of her many talents (i.e. clinical psychologist, recording technician "superb"). Thank you, Magalis!

Work on the translation of texts from the Rome 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins moves forward, and I also want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to the consecrated virgins who are spending significant time doing these translations or arranging for and reviewing translations. Truly, it is a labor of love. So, on behalf of us all, a great thanks to Mary Kay Lacke (French to English); Loretta Matulich (Spanish to English); Sabina Boet (Spanish to English); Florence Sundberg (Italian to English); Beatriz García Pérez in Mexico (English and Italian to Spanish); Carmen Margarita Munoz (English to Spanish); Gloria Irene Alvaro Sanz, Elvira Maria Cortes Blasco in Spain (translations into Spanish); Maria Luisa Oefelee (translations into German). These virgins have been working diligently on the Spanish, English, and German translations of all the texts. If any readers can offer assistance with translations into French and Italian, we will be able to also progress with publication in those languages.

Thank you! Grazie! Gracias! Merci! Danke!

. . . Judith Stegman

Coming to Know Our Divine Spouse

By Diane Christine Farr

Every Christian has the very serious, but wonderful task of coming to know our Lord Jesus Christ in their everyday lives. We might say that this is at the heart of our faith, and what guides us in the application of that faith in day-to-day living.

We do well as consecrated virgins to ponder all the ways in which we have come to know Jesus. In particular we have come to know Him as our Divine Spouse and through our consecration we are honored and privileged to address Him as such. It is only through the workings of the Holy Spirit that we have come to this profound knowledge and this loving communion with our Lord. We could not come to this understanding on our own.

Let us recall the words of the solemn blessing given to us in the concluding rite of our consecration. "The almighty Father has poured into your hearts the desire to live a life of holy virginity. May He keep you safe under his protection. May the Lord Jesus Christ with whose sacred heart the hearts of virgins are united, fill you with His divine love. May the Holy Spirit, by whom the Virgin Mary conceived her Son, to-day consecrate your hearts and fill you with a burning desire to serve God and His Church."

We see through the words of this solemn blessing that it is the action of the Holy Trinity in our souls that initiates and brings to completion our beautiful vocation. To this action we bring our loving response to **God's invitation. The Father instills into our hearts the beauty of the virginal life and draws us to his son.** Our Lord Jesus unites us closely to His heart in loving intimacy and the Holy Spirit quickens our desire to serve God generously. We can best describe our attraction and our love for our divine Bridegroom in this **antiphon taken from Monday evening of week two of the Psalter. "Yours is more than mortal beauty. Every word you speak is full of grace."** It is only this infinite beauty and perfection of Christ that satisfies the longing in our hearts to grow in holiness. We are filled with a supernatural joy, for we have found our beloved Jesus present in our virginity. Thus we have come to know Him through spousal love. Our consecration to a life of holy virginity has become for us the pearl of great price.

In our gratitude for our calling we must strive always to live in the presence of our divine Spouse. We will constantly be challenged to grow in our love for him and our understanding of his will. He delights in finding His own image in us. This can only happen, if we avail ourselves of the opportunities given us to grow in selfless giving towards others. This will be another way in which we come to know and appreciate our divine Spouse.

We must become very good listeners in prayer, taking time for silence in the presence of our Lord. In union with the Immaculate virgin we always keep our gaze fixed on Jesus. In this way we will be better prepared to be received into the kingdom of heaven as a bride of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us support each other in mutual love with absolute trust in our beloved Spouse.

Bishop Boyea continued It strikes me that there is no better meditation for us as we celebrate our Lady of Guadalupe and as we prepare for Christmas. Many blessings on you during this Holy Season and know of my prayers for you and for all who through you as a window give glory to God the Father.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

Life Corner – Florence Sundberg

As we all know, the battle for the lives of the unborn babies and their mothers is heating up. A line must be drawn in this battle, beyond which we will not go, calling to mind the words of Mother Teresa: “Either all life is sacred, or no life is sacred.” and “A nation that kills its young, cannot survive.”

Our 40 Days for Life Campaign this year brought out tens of thousands of pro-lifers of all ages, religions and political parties. There were those who physically went to stand and pray in front of abortion facilities, and there were many more who stayed behind and offered their prayers and fasting for life. Many children came out to pray and to stand for life, from elementary school children to college aged youngsters. They came from all over the United States because they understood that this ongoing extermination of human babies in the wombs of their mothers is the greatest evil of our time.

This battle in defense of life touches each one of us, all of our families, our towns, our Churches, our professions. Why? Because we ARE one body, we are the body of Christ and so what happens to any one of us affects all of us. Our Bishops came out strong against pro abortion funding in the Health Care Reform proposal. Whatever happens in the end, the battle lines are drawn and our Bishops are witnessing to life as never before. For this we are truly grateful, and for them, our Bishops, we pray.

Throughout this past 40 Days for Life, I heard many references made to the pro-life attitude, speeches and writings of former President Ronald Reagan, who seems to have experienced a strong kinship with Pope John Paul, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, Jr. I have to confess that I don't know very much about President

Reagan, but am deeply impressed with what I have learned about his pro-life stance. Therefore, as a way of initiating our new “Life Corner”, I would simply like to quote from some of President Reagan's writings and speeches in defense of life. In a future edition of the Lamp, we will bring in writings of Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, Jr., Archbishop Burke and others who have addressed this grave moral issue. And we will speak of our own experiences in defense of life and in celebrating life. Jump in if any of you have anything you want to add. It would be good to know the locations and phone numbers of Pregnancy Resource Centers in your area, in case someone asks you for help or advice. Heartbeat International has many such centers throughout the United States, as does CareNet.



President Reagan wrote: “Despite the formidable obstacles before us, we must not lose heart...we must continue to lay the groundwork for a society in which abortion is not the accepted answer to unwanted pregnancy...prayer and action are needed to uphold the sanctity of human life. Let faith and perseverance be our guide. We will never recognize the true value of our own lives until we affirm the value in the life of others,...there is no cause more important for preserving freedom than affirming the transcendent right to life of all human beings, the right without which no other rights have any meaning.”

As we go about the task of defending and of celebrating life, it is good to remember that there are many ‘lights’ penetrating the darkness of the anti-life culture and though the Light of Christ may seem to be extinguished for a while, or if battles fought in defense of life seem to be lost, the ultimate battle for life will be won because it is Christ's own battle, and His light and love are always stronger than death.

Remember: DVD's of **Judith Stegman's** appearance on *Life on the Rock* are available for \$6.00 each; 2009 convocation and information conference recordings are also available. Please see our website or email info@consecratedvirgins.org.

**United States Association
of Consecrated Virgins**

Mailing address:

300 West Ottawa Street
Lansing, Michigan 48933-1577
USA

Fax: 253-270-5507

E-mail:

info@consecratedvirgins.org
President@consecratedvirgins.org

● www.consecratedvirgins.org

Prayer from Ann Stitt:

Salutation of the Blessed Virgin – St. Francis of Assisi

Hail, holy Lady, Mother and Queen,

Mary, Mother of God, Ever Virgin;

Chosen by the most holy Father in Heaven,

Consecrated by Him,

With His most holy beloved Son

And the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

On you descended and in you still remains

All the fullness of grace

And every good.

Hail, His Palace.

Hail, His tabernacle.

Hail, His Robe.

Hail, His Mother.

And Hail, all holy Virtues,

Who, by grace

And inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

Are poured into the hearts of the faithful

So that, faithless no longer,

They may be made faithful servants of God

Through you.

Consecrations:

Argentina:

- ✦ December 8, 2009, **Monica Parra**, Diocese of Moron, at the hands of The Most Reverend Luis G. Eichhorn.
- ✦ July 9, 2009, **Alicia Sabio**, Diocese of Moron

Canada:

- ✦ August 1, 2009, **Lucie Major**, Diocese of Saint-Jean-Longueuil, Quebec, at the hands of The Most Reverend Jacques Bettelet
- ✦ November 21, 2009, **Rose-Marie Boranian** and **Christine Laporte**, Archdiocese of Montreal, Quebec, at the hands of The Most Reverend Jude Saint-Antoine, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus

France:

- ✦ November 22, 2009, **Régine Guivarch à Louviers**, Diocese of Évreux
- ✦ June 29, 2009, **Monique Pedron**, Diocese of Nantes
- ✦ October 4, 2009, **Elisabeth Wales**, Diocese of Nanterre
- ✦ November 22, 2009, **Regine Guivarch**, Diocese of Evreux
- ✦ September 8, 2007, **Betrice Devas**, Diocese of Gap
- ✦ October 18, 2008, **Thérèse Jorrot**, Diocese of Basançon

India:

- ✦ September 19, 2009, **Kate Catherine Coutinho**, Diocese of Mumbai, at the hands of The Most Reverend Agnelo Gracias

Venezuela:

September 11, 2009, **Nina Zoraida Rivas Moreno**, Archdiocese of Caracas, at the hands of The Most Reverend Pedro Nicolás Bermúdez Villamizar, C.I.M.

Switzerland:

- ✦ September 13, 2008, **Cristina Vorzun**, Diocese of Lugano

United States:

- ✦ December 5, 2009, **Marilyn Marie Wagner**, Diocese of Toledo, at the hands of The Most Reverend Leonard Blair
- ✦ October 1, 2009, **Jo Ann Guinther**, Diocese of Columbus, at the hands of The Most Reverend Frederick Campbell

An Invitations:

From **Aliceanne Sawyer:**

"My soul doth magnify the Lord.

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."

On May 31, 2010, the feast of the Visitation [and Memorial Day] I will celebrate my twentieth year of Consecration to a Life of Virginity Lived in the World. We will be celebrating simply but meaningfully at Christ the King Church in Hillside at 11 AM.

Can't make it? Yes it is Memorial Day weekend, do not feel sorry. You still can celebrate with me at my present diocese, Trenton, on June 12th, the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mass will be celebrated by Bishop John M. Smith at St. Thomas More, Manalapan, at 11 AM.

If you wish to stay overnight, please let me know so I can round up some rooms from friends and neighbors.

Please let me know **if you think you can make one or both of these** dates. Further information will be sent to those who feel called to celebrate with me in presence; I know you will all rejoice with me in spirit.

Aliceanne Sawyer, CV; 154 C Cross Slope Court; Manalapan, NJ 97726