

The Lamp



United States Association of
Consecrated Virgins

February 2, 2012
Feast of Presentation of the Lord

Volume 17, Issue 1

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

February 2, 2012 The Presentation of the Lord

As you read this letter, the bishops of Ohio and Michigan are in Rome (February 1-7) for our ad limina visit. Every so many years each bishop in the world is to pray at the tombs (ad limina) of Sts. Peter and Paul and make a report to the Holy Father on the condition of his diocese. The last time the American bishops did this was in 2004, when I was an auxiliary bishop in Detroit.

Our itinerary is pretty tight. We will be visiting many of the Roman Congregations, celebrating Mass at the various basilicas, and visiting the seminarians and priest students in Rome. Please be assured that you will be remembered in my prayers, especially at the tombs of the Apostles.

As of this writing, I am looking forward to the January 21st consecration of Dr. Janet Smith as a virgin. This will be the first time I will be celebrating this ritual and thus am quite excited about it. Dr. Smith is a professor at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, but actually lives in the Diocese of Lansing. She is a very enjoyable person who continues to make great contributions to the field of moral theology, especially in the area of sexual ethics.

What strikes me most about the ritual is the beautiful ceremony of the candle. The lighting of the candle is not just a reminder of the parable of the Wise Virgins but even more is meant to be a reflection of the light who is Christ. On this feast today, Christ comes to his temple and is seen as the light of the world. All Consecrated Virgins, as espoused to Christ, bear Christ as this light in the midst of the darkness of the world.

Thank you all for so generously and courageously lifting up Christ as that light by the very gift of your virginity, your espousal to Jesus. A blessed feast day to you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl Boyea
Bishop of Lansing

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(We continue a discussion begun in the June 2011 edition of *The Lamp*, on the elegance of the virginal vocation in the tradition of the Church, both in ancient and modern times.)

Virginal Elegance...the countenance of a sacred woman in the Church, Part III

How can people see an icon of the Church in a consecrated woman who is not dressed with the dignity of one consecrated to Christ?

What does it mean to dress with dignity? We noted in our past articles that it is important for the consecrated virgin to present to others a certain virginal “elegance” in her physical and spiritual being, an elegance corresponding to the divine grace she has received as one who is consecrated “bride of Christ,” and icon of the Church.

Dressing appropriately takes forethought and prayer, as we consciously decide how to present ourselves in various circumstances. How to dress is a decision on our part – a decision to dress casually, or formally; to dress professionally or for sports; to be concerned about cleanliness and neatness, or not; to choose appropriate jewelry and accessories, or to choose none at all; to dress simply or more fussily; to dress to attract attention to the body or to the person; to dress in a distinctly feminine manner, or not. Some days, I imagine each of us thinks that it might be easier to be a religious sister and wear a habit! And yet, it can be a great joy to give this area to our Divine Spouse and realize that this is an area of life that we can conform to His design by our own choice. Not that it isn’t challenging to find appropriate and modest and feminine clothing... perhaps we may begin to share with one another our experiences in choosing and finding appropriate clothing.

We may not all agree on the same choices as being appropriate, modest, and feminine. There isn’t a dress code for consecrated virgins. And yet, the fathers of the Church, and the example of our sisters who have lived this life for many years, do have something to tell us about dressing appropriately, modestly, and femininely.

From the fathers of the Church, we learn that the dress we use gives us distinction and dignity when we are presented to others; it should be without luxury, but should be a sign of our innocence in God’s presence, in the sense that the style should reflect our integrity of heart. The fathers of the Church remind us that a virgin’s clothing should cover her whole body, so as not to arouse the flesh towards concupiscence. (Confr. Francisco Vizmanos, *Las Virgenes Cristianas de la Iglesia Primitiva*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, pages 941-942)

Our vocation as consecrated virgins is lived in the world, but not of the world. It is truly a counter-cultural vocation, a totally radical vocation as we give ourselves in intimate union with our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, in response to the gift of virginity given us by our heavenly Father. We are called to manifest the purity of our virginal being in the meaning of the theology of the body as discussed by Blessed Pope John Paul II. A woman seeking to marry a man may dress in a way to attract a man, but a woman consecrated as a virgin must be ever careful to not be an instrument of lust to men in her dress.

It is interesting to consider the reflections of Blessed John Paul II on the words Christ spoke in the Sermon on the Mount, “with which he appealed to the human heart, exhorting it to purity. ‘You have heard that it was said, *You shall not commit adultery*. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Mt 5:27-28)’. ... Christ’s words in the Sermon on the Mount indicate that lust in itself does not reveal [the nuptial meaning of the body] to man, but on the contrary dims and obscures it. Purely biological knowledge of the functions of the body as an organism, connected with the masculinity and femininity of the human person, is capable of helping to discover the true nuptial meaning of the body only if it is accompanied by an adequate spiritual maturity of the human person.”(John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, pages 213-215).

The spiritual maturity to which we are called is rooted in the “propositum” of radical faithfulness to our Lord and Spouse in our whole being. We may find encouragement in the example of the early virgins in Antioquia, under Bishop Ignatius, who spoke of having freely immolated their bodies to honor the flesh of Jesus Christ, giving to Him all of their affections, dressing in modesty as His spouse, directing their living arrangement to His honor, and in every way giving testimony to their sublime ideal of growing in their mystical espousal to their Divine Lord. (Vizmanos, *op. cit.* page 134).

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Council News

Current council members and officers are:

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

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

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

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

Florence Sundberg, Member-at-large, 2012-2014; Diocese of Hartford

Membership Team: Magalis

Aguilera, as Vice-President of the USACV, takes up the banner of our Membership Team leader. Look for 2012 Membership renewal forms in your mail or in boxes in the next few weeks.

Formation Resource Development

Team: Mary Kay Lacke We are close to the publication of Volume I of ORDO VIRGINUM: the Restoration of the Ancient order of Virgins in the Catholic Church. This volume is entitled *Fundamental Monographs on the Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World*. The monographs are a combination of key talks given at the annual USACV Information Conference and addresses presented by Cardinal Burke and Judith Stegman at the 2008 International Congress/Pilgrimage in Rome for Consecrated Virgins Living in the World. We hope to have Volume I in print by mid-March, 2012.

We will begin working on Volume II, an historical overview of Consecrated Virginity, as soon as Volume I is published.

Getting to the point of publication, by the grace of God, has been a huge accomplishment. I am very grateful, firstly, for Divine assistance; and secondly, for the human assistance of other consecrated virgins that has gone into this project. I am especially grateful to Judith Stegman for hosting the publication team in her home to put the book together; and for her

diligence in working with the printer and the graphic artist to insure that this book came to be.

Upcoming issues of *The Lamp*:

June 3, 2012 Trinity Sunday;

September 8, 2012 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

December 12, 2012 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

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

Please send articles in electronic format at least 10 days in advance of the issuance date.

Two future **Symposiums for Consecrated Virgins**, sponsored by the Diocese of La Crosse Office of Consecrated Life, are planned for April 28, 2012 and October 13, 2012. The April topic will be "The Life and Thought of Catherine of Sienna & The Theology of the Body of Christ;" the October topic will be "The Faith of Our Lady and the Cloud of Witnesses." Registration information can be obtained from Barb Swieciak, 608-788-7700 ext 2240, or scwjoy@gmail.com

Recordings of talks from the 2011 Convocation and 2011 Informational Conference are available for order through Magalis Aguilera. Order forms may be obtained from our website or by emailing info@consecratedvirgins.org.

More announcements page 7

Upcoming events:

2012 National Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins:

July 18-22, 2012

Mundelein Retreat and Conference Center

Chicago area
(see article page 7)

2012 National Information Conference:

July 31-August 3, 2012

Bethany House

at St. Francis Retreat Center,

DeWitt, Michigan

Lansing area.
(see article page 7)

Consecration Announcements:

United States

January 21, 2012, **Janet E. Smith**, Diocese of Lansing, at the hands of His Excellency Bishop Earl Boyea. (see photos and remarks of [Dr. Smith](#) on page 5)

Italy:

January 21, 2012, **Giuliana Savi**, Diocese of Rome, at the hands of His Eminence Bishop Marciante, in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran.



from the President's journal . . .

Over the past few months, I've taken the opportunity to review some aspects of the English translation of the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity for a Woman Living in the World.

A bit of history: It was on May 31, 1970, that the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship published, in Latin, the revised Rite for Consecration of Virgins. In 1971, the International Committee on the English Language (ICEL), published the revised Rite, in English, for study and comment by the bishops of English-speaking countries. This ICEL translation was bound in green (as are other draft English language liturgical texts), and two of our United States virgins, consecrated in the early 70's, recall their Bishops using a green-bound book during their consecrations! The final English edition of the Rite, in use today, was published by ICEL in 1975.

Something I've learned along the way is that the prayers said by the Bishop during the Ritual Mass for the Consecration of a Virgin are published separately from the Rite itself. Thus, we find the full Rite of Consecration in the Book of Rites, and yet we find the Entrance Antiphon, Collect, Prayer over the Offerings, part of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Communion Antiphon, and the Prayer after Communion, in the Roman Missal, under the Ritual Mass for the Consecration of Virgins. The Solemn Blessing at the close of Mass is found in both the Rite of Consecration and the Ritual Mass.

With the recent publication of the 3rd Edition of the Roman Missal, the Church gives us new translations of the prayers for the Ritual Mass for the Consecration of Virgins. At this moment, I invite you to reflect with me just on the prayers of Solemn Blessing said by the Bishop over the newly consecrated virgin at the end of Mass:

May the almighty Father, by his protection, keep intact the resolve he has poured into your hearts to live in blessed virginity. (This new translation strengthens the language, referring to "resolve" rather than "desire.")

May the Lord Jesus, who unites himself to the hearts of sacred virgins in a nuptial covenant, make your hearts fruitful by the word that is God's seed. (Reference to a nuptial covenant is new in this translation, as is the reference to the fruitfulness of that nuptial covenant!)

May the Holy Spirit, who came down upon the Blessed Virgin and, descending today, has consecrated your hearts, fire you with zeal for the service of God and the Church. (Here there is a change in tense...the new translation clearly refers to the Holy Spirit who has already consecrated the heart of the virgin, and asks that He now fire her with zeal.)

We celebrate today the World Day of Consecrated Life, in union with all those who are consecrated to Christ in religious life, as members of secular institutes, in the eremetical life, and as consecrated virgins. To God be the glory!

Judith Stegman

Prayer for Consecrated Persons

God our Father,

we thank you for calling men and women to serve in your Son's Kingdom as sisters, brothers, religious priests, consecrated virgins, and hermits, as well as members of Secular Institutes.

Renew their knowledge and love of you, and send your Holy Spirit to help them respond generously and courageously to your will.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

USCCB

World Day for Consecrated Life

Dr. Janet Smith's Closing Remarks

As noted in his letter on page one, Bishop Boyea (Lansing) celebrated the consecration of Dr. Janet Smith, his first consecration, on the Feast of St. Agnes, January 21, 2012. Joining him as concelebrants were Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron (Detroit) and Bishop Michael J. Byrnes (Detroit Auxiliary). Following are remarks made by Janet following her consecration, to the many family members, colleagues, friends, and seminarians in attendance at her consecration:

I don't think I need to say much about the meaning of the consecration since this rite in itself surely reveals so much of what the consecration is all about -- and since I have composed not one but two letters, a short and a long version (I know my audience!), explaining the consecration, I am not sure more needs to be said about the meaning of the consecration. There are copies of the long letter on one of the tables in the reception area for those of you who may not have received one.

Here I need to attempt in some small way to express my gratitude for everyone who has been a part of getting me here and everyone who has helped with this beautiful ceremony and day.

What we have here is the body of Christ coming together to celebrate the wonders that God has prepared for us. We are the Church, celebrating being the Church, being the beloved of God.

I am so very grateful for the presence of Archbishop Vigneron, Bishop Byrnes and Bishop Boyea. Archbishop Vigneron is responsible for getting me to Michigan, most specifically Sacred Heart Major Seminary; Bishop Byrnes has been my longtime colleague there. Bishop Boyea is not only my bishop he is also the moderator for the National Association of Consecrated Virgins. He has a love for this vocation -- recently manifested in the yearly Christmas dinner he serves to all the consecrated virgins of the diocese. I am grateful for the presence of Monsignor Monforton, the rector of the seminary and so many seminary priests, who have been wonderful colleagues and models all these years.

I wish Monsignor John Esseff had been able to come today; he has been my spiritual director for five years or so.

When I told some friends he was going to be my spiritual director for my first eight day retreat, I was told to expect to experience a tsunami of love. I did experience a tsunami of love and in a sense I have been experiencing that ever since.

I am grateful for all the priests of the seminary and the diocese and beyond who have come here today to concelebrate this mass, and for all the members of religious congregations who are here. I am grateful to the other consecrated virgins who came today, especially to Judith Stegman who monitored me through the process of discernment. I am grateful to the seminarians who have made the trek here today. There are others who are on the March for Life and we should say some prayers for them. I have learned and have more to learn from all of you about lives of selfless self-giving.

I am grateful to those of you who have answered to the vocation of marriage -- I have learned and have more to learn from you about how to live in my newly married state; I hope to become as self-giving to my heavenly spouse and my spiritual children as you are to your spouses and your children. I am grateful to all the single individuals who serve the Church in so many diverse and largely unrecognized ways and I pray for those who are seeking to discover more precisely God's calling for you in this world.

Remarks continued on page 8



Dr. Janet Smith with Bishops and other consecrated virgins

More Reflections

Consecrated virgins celebrating significant anniversaries during 2011 were invited to offer a reflection on their years of living as consecrated virgins. We continue in this issue of *The Lamp*.

Anniversary Reflection: **Carmen Munoz**,
consecrated November 23, 1996

(Archdiocese of Atlanta - Diocese of St. Augustine)

Thank you for asking me to write a reflection on my 15th Anniversary year of Solemn Consecration. It was, and continues to be, a blessing to have had the opportunity to celebrate the anniversary on the previous year at the Mass of Christ the King at St. Peter's Basilica. So this very short reflection is in Praise of the Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

There is so much to be thankful for. I could resume all my life in the words of the psalmist:

*"I will sing your mercy forever, LORD and
proclaim your faithfulness through all ages."*

(Psalm 89 (88),

The initial vocation to give myself totally to Jesus Christ began at a very young age. That call from God and my *Fiat* happened because He Himself prepared the way. "...I have chosen you" (cf. John 15:16). That was a unique Gift from the Most Holy Trinity that marked my life. The desire to belong completely to Jesus through Mary, whom I love dearly, was a grace from the Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, the Mediatrix of all Graces.

The Catholic home -my loving parents and sisters- and the Catholic School education with the Carmelite Sisters of Charity, which was an extension of the family life, fostered and nurtured the vocation. A Marian, Eucharistic, and mission oriented school was an appropriate environment. In "El Colegio," we learned from the first grades about virgins and virgin-martyrs like Ven. Teresita Quevedo, St. Agnes, St. Cecilia, St. Lucy, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, St. Rose of Lima, St. Teresa of Avila. At home I began reading, in my early teens, the *Life* of St. Teresa of Avila and the *Canticle* of St. John of the Cross from the Complete Works that my father had in his library. As Blessed Pope John Paul II himself declared in his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 107, *[I]t is in the family that your people have their first experience of Gospel values and of the love which gives itself to God and to others...*

Another important aspect of my formation involved the ministry of the Priesthood as spiritual director. In

this way, a Jesuit priest, true Marian, Eucharistic, humble and with the Wisdom of God guided me in following God's call. The Contemplative Life was for me the most radical way to give oneself totally to Jesus, the Word of God. Later on, in January 1982 and after 4+ yrs. of Theological studies, a bishop mentioned to me the Consecration of Virgins and the new Canon 604. I did not know anyone who had received the Solemn Consecration of Virgins. So for the next 14+ years, through study, research, and prayer the Holy Spirit guided the way. As St. Paul confirms: The Holy Spirit *intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will (Rom. 8: 27)*. I visited missions, worked, studied, prayed, in words of St. Teresa, with *determinada, determinación*. (Way 21.2). Afterwards, I obtained a BA in English and the M.A. degree with a concentration in Spanish Linguistics, while studying more the writings of St. Augustine, St. Cyprian, St. Jerome.

Now, 15+ years since that blessed day when I was Solemnly consecrated as bride of Christ by Archbishop John F. Donoghue+ after reaffirming the "resolution to follow *Christ in the Spirit of the Gospel*", I can say that it has been a blessed journey, a journey of Love, Faith, Hope. God calls each person to live the radicalism of the Gospel. And whether in a cloister or living in the world, a bride of Christ gives witness to the Eternal Word that became a Man, born of a Virgin, and espoused humanity and Divinity in one Person, Jesus Christ. For this, many virgins became Martyrs for the Faith.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam et Ecclesiae!

+

Archbishop Donoghue was called to the House of the Eternal Father on 11-11-11. His kindness and gentle demeanor were characteristic of him. He was full of the Holy Spirit, lover of the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The simplicity and humility reflected the Presence of God.

A suggestion on World Day of Consecrated Life

Consecrated virgins may want to ask their diocesan vocation offices, or offices of consecrated life, to mention on diocesan websites the vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world, with a link to the USACV website, www.consecratedvirgins.org. Young women discerning a vocation often don't hear of the Order of Virgins, and a link to the USACV website can be most helpful in their discernment.

Announcements continued

2012 Information Conference announcement – Mary Kay Lacke

The USACV 2012 National Information Conference on the Vocation of Consecrated Virgins Lived in the World will be held from Tuesday Evening, July 31 to Friday, Aug. 3, at Bethany House of the St. Francis Retreat Center in De Witt, MI. Over the years, this conference has offered countless women significant help in the discernment of their vocation to a life of consecrated virginity lived in the world. Through input given by attendees and the experience of those conducting the Conference, it has been modified to become a strong component in the discernment process. A presentation on the discernment process per se, that was introduced at the 2011 Conference, will be expanded in the 2012 Conference, in response to an expressed need for this information.

It is important that the word is spread about the Information Conference. A flyer regarding the Conference will be available on the USACV website in a couple of weeks. Please refer interested parties to the website (www.consecratedvirgins.org).

2012 Convocation Announcement: Save the Date!

“Mystical Union with Christ: Bridal Mysticism” will be the theme for the 2012 Convocation of United States Consecrated Virgins. The convocation will be held **July 18-22, 2012**, at the Mundelein Retreat and Conference Center, and all consecrated virgins are warmly invited to attend, including consecrated virgins from other countries. Also invited to attend are virgins who have attended an Information Conference and who have been accepted by their Bishops as candidates for the consecration.

The days together are planned to include presentations on the three stages of the soul in a virgin called to a spousal relationship with Christ, drawing upon the writings of St. Teresa of Avila in order to give us tools to deepen in mystical union with Christ. We will follow these presentations with two afternoon symposia during which we will focus together on day-to-day challenges in deepening our understanding of our call to mystical marriage with Christ. **Bishop Boyea** will be our primary presenter, and, to complete the theme of the Convocation, we hope to include two presentations given by **Judith Stegman** and **Mary Kay Lacke** on Our Lady as Spouse of the Holy Spirit and The Church as the Bride of Christ. In union with the Church as Bride of Christ, we will join together in the Liturgy of the Hours for Morning, Evening and Night Prayer; and in the celebration of the supreme liturgical prayer, the Holy Mass, in union with our Divine Spouse in praise of our heavenly Father. Times of recreation, pilgrimages to Marytown and fellowship together will all, hopefully, contribute to a rich experience of convocation.

More details will follow about our convocation days together. If you have suggestions or want to help in any way, please contact Judith Stegman at president@consecratedvirgins.org. Following our new convocation protocol, **Anne Gishpert** will serve as the Host Team leader, so you can expect to also hear from her as planning proceeds.

The USACV offers a **Prayer Request Line** for anyone who would like to participate. Those who wish to offer prayers indicate their desire on the annual USACV member or friend registration forms. Prayer requests may be made by consecrated virgins or others desiring our prayer, by emailing the request to prayerrequest@consecratedvirgins.org. **Florence Sundberg** coordinates the prayer request line. She regularly receives notes of gratitude from those who appreciate knowing that virgins are praying for their intentions.

Recently, the USACV has begun to issue a biweekly news update, just for consecrated virgin members. It's an email update, but we are also mailing it to the 14 or so members without access to email. **Monday Morning Mail (MMM)** is meant as a "family" communication, with brief personal updates from consecrated virgins, as well as updates on happenings within our association. It seems to be a welcome addition to our communications and is sent out by **Judith Stegman**, with the assistance of **Barb Swieczak** and any other virgins who are available to help!

Life Corner

By Florence Sundberg

On Jan. 23rd, tens of thousands of pro-lifers marched in Washington, D.C. They came to celebrate life, to be the voice of those who have no voice: the unborn. People of different backgrounds, and different beliefs, came together to witness to the sacredness of life from conception to natural death.

It was a cold and rainy day but, although the rains came down, the spirit of joy and enthusiasm was not dampened. When asked why they came, young people spoke about how they are the post Roe vs. Wade generation who have been deeply wounded because so many brothers, sisters and friends are not with them: their lives were terminated in the womb. Yet, they have not lost the hope that Roe vs Wade will be overturned one day soon and so they marched together, singing and dancing and witnessing to the joy of life...even in the rain. There were some anti-lifers present, very few this year, who raged at those standing in silent prayer and solidarity, witnessing to life. A young woman who stood silently holding a sign saying: "I regret my abortion.", was a particular target. Some anti-life women got into her face and shouted at her, saying she should be ashamed, but she stood strong, in quiet dignity, even while tears fell silently down her cheeks. Her suffering was palpable. And yet she stood. And so do we all stand in solidarity with all who join this great cause, not only for the lives of the unborn, but for the soul of our nation.

May God, who created each of us in His own image, give us hope and strength to defend the life of each and every one of His sons and daughters at every stage of life, from conception to natural death. Amen



Dr. Smith's Remarks continued

I, too, have many to thank who have been praying for me prior to this ceremony and during it. Truly I have felt the power of the graces won by your prayers.

And last but in no way least, I thank my parents for having passed on to me the gift of faith. I know my deceased father is rejoicing with me. My mother Anne Agnes Smith, adorned in martyr's red, is here today, celebrating not only this event but her 86th birthday.

In the creed we pray to the creator of all things visible and invisible. Today we can see and hear and taste much of the beauty that God has created. I thank all those who have made this service so beautiful, the musicians and the choir, the staff of STB and the liturgy office of the Diocese of Lansing who arranged things so beautifully and for Suzanne Abdalla who has been in charge of just about everything nonliturgical. And especially I thank Fr Bob Roggenbuck who out of love for the Church, out of love for the consecrated life, out of love for the members of this parish, among them, me, outdid himself in making this a truly splendid service.

This service celebrates not just my consecration but celebrates the love that God has for all souls; it celebrates God's desire to be the bridegroom of every soul.

I have loved this liturgy and right now give notice to my family that I want essentially the same for my funeral!

Our living attendance at our own funerals is not possible, but I feel that in some sense I have attended mine today. Today, I hope, is a death to an old self and the birth of a new self; of a new life intimately connected to Christ that partakes more fully here and now in the heavenly joys that await us after this life. I know many of you who are married and many of those who made lifetime consecrations did not expect to experience your vocations as a death, but, at times, I suspect they have been pretty scary. Become selfless is a painful process! I also suspect that you have experienced life in newly vibrant ways beyond your wildest dreams – joy and love are the result of selflessness. I never dreamed I would be here. God is full of surprises.

My middle name is Elizabeth and as I have gotten older I have identified more and more with Elizabeth who conceived John the Baptist in her old age. In my garden I have a large and beautiful statue of the visitation – of the miraculously pregnant Mary coming to visit with the miraculously pregnant Elizabeth. Every day I look out at Mary the mother of our Lord, surely forever astonished at what the Lord did for her, and Elizabeth, surely forever astonished at what the Lord did for her. Today, count me officially among the forever astonished. I thank you for your prayers and promise you mine.

Glorifying The Heart of Our Bridegroom

By Diane Christine Farr

In the homily for the rite of the consecration of virgins we read; "The Holy Spirit, the paraclete, through baptism has already made you temples of God's glory and children of the Father. Today through our ministry he anoints you with a new grace and consecrates you to God by a new title. He gives each of you the dignity of being a bride of Christ and binds you to the Son of God in a covenant to last forever."

It is our openness and our receptivity to the working of the Holy Spirit that enables us to embrace with humility and joy our unique vocation within the Church. Indeed it is with deep humility and reverence that we ponder what it means to be chosen to be a bride of Christ.

The attractiveness and beauty of consecrated virginity comes directly from the heart of Jesus. St Faustina has called virginity a flower taken from the Divine Heart. We seek to glorify the Heart of our Bridegroom through the total gift of ourselves to him. We must cultivate the garden of our nuptial love through prayer, silence and intimate communion with our Divine Spouse. It is vital to keep our gaze continually directed toward Him and always maintain a listening heart. Our lives will become a celebration of the treasure of this virginal love expressed between Bridegroom and bride. Our heart should sing a hymn of gratitude for every grace we have received.

In imitation of the Blessed Virgin our virginity becomes fruitful in many ways. We seek to bring the presence of Christ into the world through the testimony of our lives. In perfect fidelity to his Sacred Heart we hope to bring Christ's own truth, beauty, gentleness and peace into the lives of other people. We will spend our entire life in coming to know more intimately this heart of our beloved spouse. In this knowledge we will seek to love and serve him in the lives of others.

The homily for the rite of consecration goes on to explain how our vocation speaks to others of the world to come where there is no marriage. All are challenged to recognize the primacy of our relationship with God above all others. All are challenged to a higher moral standard and a higher degree of holiness.

We know that growing in holiness means growing in love while keeping the commandments. As brides of Christ we should be a blessing to one another. In union with the heart of Jesus we are called to strengthen and support each other especially in times of great suffering. As members of Christ's mystical body we will all experience something of His dying and rising again in our own existence. As His faithful brides we cling to his heart with absolute trust and confidence in His will for us.

Our mission in this life is very important though we are always longing to behold the face of our Spouse. One day we will be as so many white lilies around his throne offering the fragrance of our love and adoration forever more.

Special invitations:

Invitation from consecrated virgin **Jeanne McNulty**: "**Cathy Leahy** and I would like to let our Consecrated Virgin sisters know that we would love to have you come to the hills of WV for a retreat, communal evening Office and a couple of shared meals together. If interested you could visit the site: www.wvfranciscanhermitage.com. It'd be a joy to have you!"

Friendly message from **Lisandra** and the consecrated virgins in Costa Rica, received December 29, 2011: It's a blessing to share with you the picture of Cartago's group of consecrated virgins, a fruit of your visit with us last spring. Our retreat ended yesterday, and we are so pleased to now be together under our Bishop's care and blessing. We have Marianella's consecration on July 16th 2012. You are all invited to come!!! Happy, Happy New Year in the Heart of our Spouse.



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

*Something Ancient . . . Something New
continued*

How should the virgins of our day dress, in order to reflect the dignity, the elegance, of their espousal to Christ? Certainly, with a concern to modesty - and erring on the side of covering our bodies more, rather than less; with a concern for femininity - wearing skirts and dresses, and feminine pants suits more frequently than not; with a concern for simple elegance and respect for the situation - dressing up for visits to Church and chapel, respecting dress "codes" for various occasions; and with a respect for ourselves - attending to cleanliness and neatness.

We close with a passage from Scripture referring to Christian wives (which we are!): "Your adornment should not be an external one: braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, or dressing in fine clothes, but rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the imperishable beauty of a gentle and calm disposition, which is precious in the sight of God." May our dress permit that imperishable beauty to shine through, that all might come to know the love of the Divine Bridegroom.

A Special Birthday Greeting

Thank you Judith Stegman for your dedicated life for His Glory, and for your "FIAT "to the call of the Eternal Father to be HIS Son's Spouse! HAPPPY BIRTHDAY this FEBRUARY 29 TH and I ask prayers for all your intentions!

Clarification concerning associations of consecrated virgins:

This past October, a number of consecrated virgins, in various countries, expressed concern and confusion when they received a summary report of the text of a supplement to the September 2011 issue, no. 70, of the excellent French journal, *Christi Sponsa*. Unfortunately, the supplement had incorrectly reported remarks made by the Most Reverend Jean-Pierre Cattenoz, Archbishop of Avignon, concerning associations of consecrated virgins. Due to the confusion that was caused by the inaccurate report, it is important that we now note the clarification by Archbishop Cattenoz, which was published as a supplement to *Christi Sponsa* no. 71, dated January 1, 2012.

Archbishop Cattenoz's clarification makes clear that the earlier reporting of his remarks was inaccurate, and he notes that he regrets not having been able to read and to revise notes taken by secretaries concerning his words, before they were originally published in *Christi Sponsa*. He states that it was never his intention to say that Rome had asked that there be no associations of consecrated virgins ("Je n'ai jamais dit: 'Rome a demandé qu'il n'y ait pas de Service de Coordination pour l'OCV.'") Rather, he acknowledges the sentence in Canon 604, paragraph 2, permitting associations, and the fact that several countries in the world have associations of consecrated virgins. Archbishop Cattenoz has been a devoted Bishop for consecrated virgins in France, and many consecrated virgins from other countries will recall his presentation at the Rome 2008 International Congress-Pilgrimage of Consecrated Virgins, entitled, "Do You Wish to Recognize Christ as Your Spouse?"

We are circulating this clarification in order to correct the record and put to rest any confusion caused by the earlier report. In summary, it is not true that "Rome" had asked that there be no associations of consecrated virgins. In fact, Canon 604 specifically permits associations of consecrated virgins: "Virgins can be associated together to fulfill their pledge more faithfully, and to assist each other to serve the Church in a way that befits their state." (Can 604 §2) Several countries have associations of consecrated virgins that are well-received by their Bishops, including the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins and the Ordo Virginum Deutschland e.V.