

The Lamp



United States Association of Consecrated Virgins

January, 2006
Epiphany

Volume 11, Issue 1

from Judith's journal . . .

"Come, my beloved, my beloved, come! The joyous incarnation of the Creator is a great love story that cries "Come" to the depths of the human heart. "Come" to the virgin and "Come" to the married; come to the intimacy of union with God, the God who became flesh and dwelt among us, restoring us to the created dignity of our humanity. Come to Christ Jesus, the son of the Virgin Mary; come to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ Jesus.

Cause for anxiety seems endless these days - from events in the world about us and events in our own lives. And yet we hope and are drawn to thanksgiving for the action of God we perceive clearly in the midst of the events. I think of the work of our own sis-

ter consecrated virgins helping to offer safety and refuge to hurricane victims; of the work of our sisters in mission territories (in the U.S. and outside); of the perseverance, by grace, in prayer and good works of each consecrated virgin living and serving those given to her in daily life; and I think of those recently and newly entrusted with the grace of Consecration.

Our Lady of Guadalupe spoke words of maternal encouragement to Juan Diego (and to each of her children) at a time of great historical turbulence in the Americas: "I am your merciful Mother. The merciful Mother of all of you who live united in this land, and of all mankind, of all those who love me. . . Hear and let it penetrate into your

heart, my dear little son; let nothing discourage you, nothing depress you. Let nothing alter your heart, or your countenance. Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else that you need? Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain."

May we embrace the incarnate love of our Bridegroom and the care of our Blessed Virgin Mary as we enter the grace-filled year of 2006, and may we gratefully return this love by persevering in our chosen vocation of perpetual virginity.

Judith

Inside this issue:

Something Ancient, Something New	2
Council News	3
Just Among Us	3
New Consecrations	4
2006 Convocation Topics & Dates	5

Special points of interest:

- *Tax Exempt Status granted*
- *Council Activities*
- *Request for retreat suggestions*
- *2006 Information Conference news*
- *Poem by Jeanne Kun*

USACV Tax-Exempt Status

Good news! We received word from the Internal Revenue Service that our application for tax-exemption has been approved. Effective November 14, 2003, the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins is approved as a public charity under Code Section 501(c)3. Donations to the USACV are tax deductible as charitable contributions on United States income tax returns.

SOMETHING ANCIENT, SOMETHING NEW

Brides of the Lamb, older and younger

“Come, I will show you the woman who is the bride of the Lamb” (Rev. 21) Our sisters who preceded us in their “propositum” of perpetual virginity discovered the spousal meaning of their consecration to our Divine Lord Jesus Christ in the image of the Church, the bride of the Lamb.

Perpetual virginity as a bride of Christ is truly a gift to be discovered, received, cherished, and nourished. As a woman discovers and receives this gift, at any age and in the midst of her particular circumstances, she is invested with the grace and the strength needed to keep the integrity of her virginity for her Divine Lord, her Bridegroom or her Spouse. In our day, the Consecration is often conferred at an older age, and indeed it is often recommended that due to its permanence the virgin should be at least thirty years of age before receiving the consecration. In our day, virgins have requested and received the Consecration in their fifties, sixties, and seventies, after having faithfully persevered in lives of virginity dedicated to Christ and just now being graced with the opportunity for Consecration at the hand of their Bishop.

More and more frequently in our

day, we also find that young virgins are requesting the Consecration, confident in the call and gift of perpetual virginity they’ve discovered within themselves and ready to fully return this gift to Christ and receive the grace of Consecration. Circumstances are different in twenty-first century secular society, but let us take a look at the ages of our consecrated sisters in earlier centuries.

In the ancient Church there was no age restriction for virgins to be admitted to the Order of Virgins and those who discovered and received the gift of virginity were often consecrated at as young an age as 16 or 17 years. Saint Agnes was not even 13 years old when she suffered martyrdom as a virgin bride of her Divine Spouse (304-305 A.D. under Emperor Diocletian).

How can we not recall the familiar words of young Saint Agnes as she spoke to her executioner about her marriage to her Christ: “It would be an insult to my Spouse to think that I would consent to you. He who chose me first shall possess me. Why do you delay, executioner? Let this body perish which could be loved by eyes which I do not want”. And St. Ambrose reports that she stood in prayer and bowed her head, “If she had been a bride, she would

not have so hastened to the marriage couch as she, being a virgin, hurried with joyful step to the place of execution, her head adorned with Christ instead of plaits, and with her own virtues instead of garlands of flowers”. (St. Ambrose, Treatise on Virgins, Book I, chapter 5, 7-9).

Documents from the fourth century show us other virgins consecrated at a young age including Marcelina, the sister of Saint Ambrose, consecrated by Pope Liberio (352-353) in the Basilica of Saint Peter; Asella, consecrated by 346; and Irene, the sister of Pope Damaso, who was consecrated and died before she reached the age of 20 and before her brother was named Pope in 366. The Council of Saragossa (380 A.D.), however, decreed that the veil should be conferred at 40 years of age, and not before, to those who had kept their “propositum” of virginity.

During the sixteen century, while the Consecration of Virgins was not conferred upon women living in the world, a new form of consecrated life for virgins arose in Brescia, Italy. The Company of St. Ursula was open to virgins who were at least twelve years of age – and younger girls could be received into the [continue page 4](#)

Council News

Election Results

We welcome Aliceanne Sawyer as the new Council Member at Large. She will begin her three year term January 1, 2006. A sincere thank you to Maryann Sbrljan and Mary Kay Lacke who also ran in this election; it is encouraging to see their generosity and interest in giving of their time and gifts to the Association.

Thank you to Outgoing Council Member Rita Mawn

When Rita first offered to run for an open Council seat, she said that she thought she would have something to offer to this group. She has surely done so by her calm, mature, and insightful outlook on so many matters. Hers has been a service not always visible to many but priceless in its value. Thank

you, Rita, and thank you also for your faithful and prompt service as our Secretary, filling orders for printed materials and preparing meeting minutes.

Just among us . . .

Cathy Maley sends notes on some books of interest:

The True Spouse of Christ by Alphonsus De Liguori is available from Tan Books (800-437-5876) The book code is # 1079 and sells for \$15.00. This is a true spiritual classic and while much of it is directed toward religious sisters with the observance of their vows, still much of it is foundational to the spiritual life with such topics as solitude and silence, purity of intention, a summary of virtues for those intent upon becoming saints, patience in general, in times of temptation and in sickness, humility of the intellect, charity in one's thoughts, interior and exterior mortification, detachment from self-will, resignation to God's will, the ex-

cellence of virginity and the merit of virgins consecrated to God.

The Nuptial Mystery by Angelo Cardinal Scola, William Errdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005 ISBN # 0-8028-2831-0 is available through Amazon.com or Pauline Books. This book discusses, in depth, why the married and the consecrated are called to understand this mystery more profoundly. "The principal way to grasp the spousal bond between Christ and the Church is the figure of Mary...the image of God is completed in interpersonal communion...through the hypostatic union the person of Jesus Christ constitutes the place of the encounter between God

and humanity. This encounter can be read as a spousal union; indeed, it constitutes the new spousality: Only the supreme act of God's love who, emptying himself of his divinity, gives himself entirely, opens the possibility of a renewed union. The dual unity of man and woman is remade in the hypostatic union of Christ which becomes its foundation...We must admit that a culture that does not accept the revelation of the trinitarian God ultimately renders itself incapable of understanding sexual difference in a positive sense... Not for nothing does the open acceptance of homosexuality belong both to classical paganism and to the paganism of the present day...The dual unity of man and woman shows us that difference, without confusion and without separation, is something positive, something that exalts, not destroys, unity."

Consecration Announcements:

Prayerful congratulations and welcome to our newest sisters in the Order of Virgins:

Carmen Martin Carbonell, Diocese of Valencia (Spain), October 1, 2005

(She is the first in that diocese to be consecrated.)

Betsy A. Lillis, October 18, 2005, Most Rev Charles J. Chaput, Archdiocese of Denver.

Peggy Popkey, Diocese of Houston, November 19, 2005 Feast of Christ the King, Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza.

Denise Farrell, Diocese of Rockville Centre (New York), December 8, 2005, Bishop William Murphy



New bride of Christ
Denise Farrell with
Bishop
William
Murphy,
Bishop of
Rockville
Centre.

Something Ancient, Something New *continued*

group in order to be taught the truth of “this unique way of life.” This way of life was for those who had been “chosen to be true and virginal spouses of the Son of God” and who, continuing to live with their own families or often as household help in the homes of relatives or employers, responded to the instruction of older Saint Angela Merici as she taught them to “desire and embrace the means and ways necessary to persevere

and prosper till the end [the heavenly homeland]”. [The Rule of the Company of Saint Ursula, translated from the text of the Trivulsian manuscript by Nettina Gullo Ecker and Mary-Cabrini Durkin, 1997, revised 2004] In future months, we’ll explore more of St. Angela’s directives to these virgins living in the world. . .

Human maturity is a discovery process – a discovery process of one’s own self, one’s own vocation, one’s own call and gift from God. It seems those gifted to be

brides of the Lamb often discover this gift as adolescents and begin then to live it faithfully. As a gift to be cherished and nourished, let us assist young virgins in their resolve to persevere faithfully before receiving the Consecration of Virgins at the hands of their Bishops. And let all who have received such a precious gift persevere faithfully until we greet our Beloved in the heavenly Kingdom. - Magalis Aguilera, *Something Ancient*, and Judith Stegman, *Something New*

E-mail prayer line policies

Please see the enclosed revised policies for use of our e-mail prayer request line. Members and friends may sign up to participate on the USACV annual registration form.

Your recommendations for places of personal retreat?

We’d love to pass along your recommendations in a future column of “Just Between Us”, so please pass along your thoughts so we can begin a list of personal favorites of consecrated virgins.

2006 Information Conference

The **2006 Information Conference** is scheduled for August 2 to August 4, 2006 at the Cenacle in downtown Chicago, Illinois. Theresa Marshall will again generously coordinate the conference for us. Please see the enclosed flyer for details and consider posting it or passing it along to friends who may be interested. The Holy Spirit seems to always work through this conference in the hearts of those discerning a vocation to Consecrated Virginité Lived in the World.

In process...

Please pray for some works in process in the Association – our “**Vocations Tree**” project, our soon-to-be-launched **Formation Resources Development Committee**, and a **pastoral planning project** in its beginning stages. If you desire to help plan the **2006 Convocation**, please see the notice above and contact a **Council member**. *We welcome your participation.*

2006 Convocation of Consecrated Virgins in the United States

2006 Convocation of Consecrated Virgins in the United States

Theme: “Prefer nothing, absolutely nothing to the love of Christ” – a look at the mission of consecrated virgins in today’s Church and society

**August 9, 2006 -
August 13, 2006**

The 2006 Convocation is scheduled for Wednesday August 9 to Sunday August 13, 2006 at Our Lady of the Snows Shrine in Belleville, Illinois (near St. Louis). Please let Judith Stegman or a Council member know if you would be interested in helping to plan this convocation.

The convocation theme will focus on the particular *mission* of consecrated virgins in today’s Church and society, a mission expressed in a motto of St. Benedict, recently commended to consecrated persons by Pope Benedict: “Prefer nothing, absolutely nothing to the

love of Christ.” A further taste:

“[the consecrated person] lives in time, but his heart is projected beyond time and witnesses to contemporary man – often absorbed by the things of this world – that his true destiny is God himself. . . Do not be afraid to present yourselves, even visibly, as consecrated persons, and try with all means to manifest your belonging to Christ, the hidden treasure for which you left everything.” – Pope Benedict, December 2005 [Zenit]

2006 Membership Registration Forms

Watch for these to come soon!

**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

**“As a young man marries a virgin,
Your builder shall marry you.
And as a bridegroom rejoices in his
bride,
So shall your God rejoice in you”**

--Isaiah 62:5 (MAB)

Virgin Gift

The gift is given.

All that I am—
And what I'm not

All that I have--
And what I lack

Are freely offered you.

And yet more:

Cherished hopes—
Those fulfilled
And those now never to be

Promises of the heart—
Those truly kept
And those unkept and broken
Time and time again

And glowing, incandescent dreams--
Those yet to be
And those long shattered and lost.

The worth of this gift only you know:
A heap of dross—
Or gold hidden there within,
Refined and purified by my longings?

Make of this gift
All that you will, O Lord.

I am yours.

September 16, 1997,
copyright Jeanne Kun